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Vol. 3

THE

Repository of Knowledge,

HISTORICAL, LITERARY, MISCELLANEOUS, AND THEOLOGICAL.

Vol. I.] WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 1801. [No. I.

TO BE CONTINUED EVERY MONTH

CONDITIONS.

I. Each number will consist of sixty-four large octavo pages, on a fine paper and beautiful type.

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PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED BY HUGH MAXWELL.

1801.

Price Twenty-five Cents.

THIS Magazine will consist of four departments. The

I. Will exhibit a concise view of the origin and progress of revealed religion, the state and circumstances of the church and of the world, and the most remarkable events which have happened in the former and the latter, from the commencement of time to the period in which we live.

II. Will contain a demonstration of the being and perfections of God, from a brief survey of the heavens and the earth; including a sketch of the most useful sciences; particularly, astronomy, geography, natural history, moral philosophy, natural philosophy, chronology, &c.

III. Will consist of miscellaneous communications, biography; anecdotes; antiquities; criticisms; remarkable occurrences in the natural, political, moral, and religious world; intelligence concerning the state of the churches at home and abroad; occasional reviews of new publications; missions for propagating the gospel among the heathen; new discoveries and improvements in the arts and sciences, &c.

IV. Will comprise a series of lectures on the various doctrines and duties of the Christian religion; intended to explain, and to confirm them against the objections of Jews, Deists, and other adversaries; forming a system of doctrinal and practical divinity, interspersed with occasional historical accounts of the most material controversies in religion, and in philosophy as connected with religion, which have been agitated in earlier and later times.

VI mo1

THE

REPOSITORY OF KNOWLEDGE,

HISTORICAL, LITERARY, MISCELLANEOUS,
AND THEOLOGICAL.

HISTORY.

A compendious history of the origin and progress of revealed religion, the state and circumstances of the Church, and the most important revolutions which have occurred in the former and the latter, from the earliest ages to the present times; comprehending a period of five thousand and eight hundred years.

THE Advantages of history, civil and sacred, are sufficiently obvious and universally acknowledged. It brings into our view transactions and events, which were accomplished long before we had a being, and of which, otherwise, we must have remained ignorant. To review the conduct of Providence, especially as it is employed about the Church on earth, in earlier and later times, is an employ, at once, instructive and entertaining

The term, in the Greek New Testament, which we translate Church, has been used to denote any public assembly, lawful, or unlawful, convened for a good purpose or a bad. Waving a variety of definitions and distinctions, which have been used by writers on this subject; by Church I understand that part of mankind, whether great or small, that, in every age of the world, under both the Old Testament and the New, professes faith in the Saviour, and

subjection to his government and laws. The erection of the Church, from this definition it is apparent, must have been subsequent to the fall, and the first promulgation of the gospel to our fallen parents in Eden. From this original discovery of the Saviour to the first man, in his lapsed state, to our own times, I hope, I shall be able to trace a Church, greater or smaller, more or less visible, in one part of our world or another. That our original ancestors embraced the revelation of the Saviour, and began, immediately after, to worship God in a manner unknown to them in their primeval state, to worship him through the intervention of a Mediator, I shall in the sequel have occasion to shew.

But, before I enter on this part of my undertaking, I shall, in an introductory manner, review that part of the Mosaic history, that relates the important transactions, which preceded the fall of man, and the revelation of the Saviour. This is comprised in the first two chapters of Genesis.

Here the following important particulars present themselves to our view: *The creation of the heavens and the earth; the formation of the first human pair; the institution of the sabbath; the terrestrial paradise; the federal transaction between God and man; and the origin of marriage.*

Concerning the origin of the world, various, discordant, contradictory theories have been published. The opinion of the eternity of the world, which has been held by Pagan philosophers, is equally repugnant to the sacred scriptures and the principles of sound philosophy. Of the great antiquity of the universe, the most extravagant and fabulous ideas have been entertained, by the Chinese, the Babylonians and the Egyptians. Concerning the early existence of it, several Christian writers have formed a variety of speculations. But, as has been observed, were we, for a moment, to set revelation aside, we might on rational principles, with a high degree of pro-

bability, though not with infallible certainty, infer the short duration of the world. For this we might plead the general tradition of the most ancient nations; the concurring testimony of the earliest philosophers and poets; the total deficiency of all history preceding the Mosaic; the manifold and palpable absurdities and contradictions of those few accounts, which pretend to greater antiquity; the number of the inhabitants of the earth; the continued discoveries of new countries; the late invention of many useful arts and sciences, &c. But, without revelation, all speculation concerning the origin of the world is conjecture, uncertainty, fable, perplexity. The books of Moses are confessedly the most ancient in the world. In these and the subsequent sacred writings alone, is an authentic, consistent, satisfactory account of the origin of all things to be found. Concerning the original production of the heavens and the earth, as well as the economy of providence and grace, the scripture gives us sufficient information. That God, at the time and in the manner, related by Moses, created the heavens and the earth, ever has been an article of the creed of both Jews and Christians. *Through faith*, says an apostle, *we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* Often has presumptuous man arraigned the Omnipotent at his bar. Why, it has been asked, was not creation accomplished ages before it commenced? If one asks, why it did not happen at an earlier period, I may, with equal reason, ask, why it was not delayed till a later. But ever ought we to recollect, that the Omnipotent acts not according to the extent of his power, but according to the wise determinations of his sovereign and uncontrollable will. Among many other questions on this subject, it has been queried, at what season of the year the world was created; whether in spring or autumn. One thing is certain, the fruits of the earth were produced in a state of maturity. Nor is it unworthy of notice, that the

Jewish year commenced in autumn. I speak not of the sacred, but of the civil year of the Jews.

Concerning the extent, in which the Mosaic history of creation is to be interpreted, Christian writers are divided in their sentiments. One restricts it to the earth; another extends it to the solar system; and many understand it of all worlds, visible and invisible, known and unknown. Not only the heavenly bodies, it has been pretended, but the earth itself existed prior to the six days, to which that part of sacred history, we are now reviewing, refers; and was then reduced to that form in which we now behold it. Suffice it for me to say, we have no authentic, consistent, satisfactory information concerning the origin of things, but what we collect from the sacred volume, and concerning any world prior to the Mosaic creation, the scripture has said nothing. Of hypotheses, conjectures, speculations, there is no end. Under the appellation of the heavens and the earth the scripture seems to comprehead all worlds and creatures, Acts xvii. 24.

The chronology of the world, which our best writers have almost universally adopted, is that of the celebrated archbishop Usher; a man equally famous for learning and piety. This computation, conformably to the Hebrew text, fixes the creation four thousand and four years before the Christian æra.

The term *Creation*, seems to have, in general, two significations in the the Mosaic history; a primary and a secondary. According to the former acceptation it denotes the production of *something* out of nothing. According to the latter it signifies the formation of creatures, of various species, out of *the common* mass of pre-existent matter. In both acceptations it is exemplified in the first of the two chapters before us. In the introductory words, *God created the heavens and the earth*, it seems to denote the production of the whole materials of which the various creatures were afterwards formed; and, in the

subsequent part of the chapter, it denotes the various modifications, which the different parts of the mass underwent, in the formation of the numerous and diversified material beings, with which the upper and lower worlds were replenished.

These various kinds of creatures, inhabitants of the earth, of the water, and of the air, the Omnipotent, no doubt, could have produced in a moment. But, for wise and gracious purposes, he chose to form them, not in a moment, an hour, or a day, but in six days. Fanciful and groundless is the opinion, that by six days, the sacred historian intends six thousand years.

In the Mosaic account of creation, it has been observed, there is no mention of angels. But may they not be included in the *host of heaven*, in that brief recapitulation of the works of creation, *thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them*, Gen. ii. 1? That they were the first, or among the first, as they, doubtless, are the best of the works of the great Creator, is, in the highest degree, probable. Hence the scripture represents them as spectators of the subsequent parts of the work. Thus the Almighty accosts Job, and, I may add, each of us: *Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding, who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof, when the morning-stars sang together, and all the* angelical *sons of God shouted for joy*, Job. xxxviii. 4. 5. 6. 7.

I should now review the distinct account which the sacred historian has given us of the work of each of the six days in order. But the important doctrine of creation, in its commencement, progress and completion, I shall fully discuss in the systematical part of this work.

What a stupendous display of the infinite power of the Deity is creation? With what facility does he accomplish it! he has only to say, and it is done. It has been observed, that the word translated *said*, in the account of the production of light, is elsewhere translated *commanded*. With the Almighty, to say, is to command; and to command is to accomplish.

His wisdom never was defeated, his power never was, never can be resisted, his goodness knows no boundaries. He speaks and he acts in a manner peculiar to himself, and to which no creature can *pretend*.

In how beautiful an order does the Omnipotent proceed in creation! What a beautiful gradation in it! In creation, it has been justly observed, there are no chasms; all the parts of it are admirably connected to make up one universal whole; there is one chain of beings from the lowest up to the highest, from an insect to an archangel. The scale of creation does not advance by leaps, but by gentle degrees. One rises gradually above another; dead matter, unorganized earth, minerals, vegetables, insects, reptiles, fishes, birds, beasts, man, angels. It is observed by the wisest of men, *that the end of a thing is better than the beginning thereof*. In all the works of the Deity, in the world and in the church, there is a visible gradation, a glorious progression from a less to a more perfect state. In the works of creation; in the economy of providence in the world; especially in the economy of grace in the church, is this observation illustriously exemplified. Having made a variety of species of inferior beings, and, in every respect, fitted the world for his reception and accommodation, God formed that superior being, who, as the vice-gerent of his great Creator, was to have dominion over all the inferior creatures in this lower world.

The creation of man, to every reader it must have occurred, is introduced with peculiar solemnity. On

this important occasion the almighty Creator speaks thus: *Let us make man in our likeness, after our image.* When light was to be produced, God only said, let there be light, and there was light. But when about to create man, he seems to hold a consultation. Was the Deity at a loss? Was he undetermined whether, or in what manner, he should proceed? No, from an earliest eternity the plan was formed, and he, who formed, with equal facility, executed it. Here is a plain intimation of the superiority of man to all the other creatures below. The phraseology here has been supposed to allude to the royal stile among men. But the practice of speaking in the plural number is of late invention among the potentates of the earth. On this occasion, some Jewish interpreters have imagined, the Deity consulted with certain beings of the angelical kind, whom he was pleased to employ as co-adjutors, or, at least, as instruments in the formation of man. But do not the scriptures every where represent creation as the special prerogative and peculiar work of Deity; a work which he *alone* can perform? The expression, used on this occasion, is, doubtless, intended to signify the concurrence and co-agency of all the sacred Three in the creation of man, as, under his maker, lord of this lower world, and of all the creatures in it. In the introductory account of creation, Gen. i, 1, it has been observed, the noun, that denotes the great agent in this work, is plural, and the verb, that expresses his agency in it, is singular. The Godhead is one and undivided; the persons are three, and, though not divided, distinguished one from another.

Of man alone, to the exclusion of all other creatures on earth, it is affirmed, that he was formed in the likeness and after the image of his maker. By this image of God, certain interpreters have understood that idea in the divine mind, in conformity to which man was created. But, according to this

hypothesis, every creature on earth, as well as in heaven, the insect no less than the angel, may be affirmed to be in the image of God. In all his works, in the world and in the church, the Deity acts in exact conformity to a plan, which, before creation commenced, he ever had in his all-comprehending mind. The image of God, which was the distinguishing honour of human nature, in its primeval state, has been considered in a twofold view; as physical and as moral. Man is a being of the compound kind; partly material and partly immaterial. In his material part he has propensions and appetites similar to those of the beasts which perish. In his immaterial and immortal part he has powers and operations analogous to those of angels: and, which is a far higher consideration, he bears a resemblance to his almighty Maker, of which material beings are incapable. On this account God is denominated, *The Father of spirits*. Heb. xii. 9. But the chief dignity of human nature, in its original state, consisted in its conformity to the moral perfections of the Deity. *God made man upright*. Eccl. vii. 29. Though this original rectitude was not so essential to man, but that he might be despoiled of it and still continue to be a man, it was concreated and coeval with him. He was, at once, a man and an upright man. Of his almighty Maker, he also bore a faint resemblance in that universal authority, with which he was invested, and the consequent uncontrolled dominion which he exercised over the inferior creatures. That this, though not the principal feature, pertained to that image of God, after which man was formed, the sacred history plainly intimates; the great Creator having said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, immediately adds, *and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea*, &c. That this image of God extended to both the man and the woman, is manifest from the express words of the

sacred historian; *God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.* The extravagant things, which Jewish and Mahomedan writers have told us, of the gigantic size of the first man, and celestial beauty of the first woman, I pass as nugatory and trifling. That they were perfect, in both corporeal and mental accomplishments, to a degree of which it is difficult for us to form an adequate idea, must be admitted. Holy and, therefore, happy pair! happy in the sweet intercourse they had with each other; happier, incomparably happier still, in the ineffably sweeter intercourse they had with their common Creator and God.

The institution of the sabbath, the history of the primeval state relates in terms the most unequivocal and express. Thus it speaks, *and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.* Gen. ii. 2, 3. From the manner in which our translation introduces the sanctification of the sabbath, superficial readers may suppose that creation was finished, not on the sixth but on the seventh day. Thus the history speaks, *on the seventh day God ended his work*—But the Hebrew phrase, it has been observed, ought to be translated thus, *on the seventh day God had ended his work.* That creation was finished on the sixth day is manifest from the concluding words of the first chapter, in which the Almighty seems to make a solemn pause, and to review all his works; and, upon a review of them, to pronounce them all *very good.* On the last and best day of the week God is said to rest. Was he weary? No, *the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary.* Isa. xl. 28. He

rested! How? He ceased to produce any new species or kind of creatures. This day God is said to sanctify, or, as the plain import of the Hebrew text is, set apart from a common to a sacred use. Every day, indeed, is God's, the night also is his; but this day he has, in a peculiar manner, appropriated to himself and his solemn service.

It has been pretended, that the institution of the sabbath is introduced into this part of sacred history by anticipation. According to this opinion, the sabbath was not instituted, and, therefore, not observed, in the church, till the promulgation of the law from Sinai, and the commencement of the Mosaic dispensation. Arbitrary interpretation, unsupported by any proper authority! an interpretation which the scripture contradicts, rather than sanctions. If the sabbath was not a primeval institution; if it was not to obtain in the world till two thousand five hundred years after the creation; for what purpose, with what propriety, is it introduced into the history of the creation and of the primeval state? What! a church, for no less than between two and three thousand years, without a sabbath! It is impossible. Never has the church been, never shall she be without her sabbaths. Nay, to the church triumphant in heaven an everlasting *sabbatism remaineth*. Heb. iv. 9. But, not to substitute assertion in place of argument, probability in room of certainty; in the history of the earliest ages, short and sparing as it is, we have hints sufficiently plain, of the observation of stated seasons; particularly the seventh-day sabbath, as a season of solemn worship in the patriarchal church. Remarkable to this purpose is the Mosaic account of the time, at which Cain and Abel performed the most solemn parts of their worship. Of the important circumstance of the season, the most express mention is made. *In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord And Abel, he also brought of the first-*

lings of his flock, and the fat thereof. When, on what occasion did the two brothers perform this solemn service? It was in process of time; or, as the Hebrew text emphatically expresses it, *at the end of days*—At the end of what days? Doubtless, the days of the week; on the last of those days of which the week consists; on that last and that best of the days of the week, which God, *from the beginning*, has blessed and sanctified; appropriating it to himself and his sacred service, as a returning weekly memorial of the great work of the creation of the world. It has, accordingly, been observed, that the septenary division of time, that is, the division of it into weeks, consisting of seven days, obtained all over the eastern world, from the earliest ages. This reckoning obtained, not only among the Jews, but among the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Arabians, the Persians, and even the Indians; and carries in it a manifest allusion to the number of days in which creation was accomplished; and the first weekly memorial of it was celebrated. Neither is it unworthy of observation here, that even the ancient Pagans held the seventh day of the week to be sacred. Numerous quotations to this effect have been made from their writings both by Jews and Christians. Both Hesiod and Homer expressly call the seventh, the *sacred day*. The Hebrews express seven by a word that signifies perfection. In seven days the creation of all things, and the institution and original observation of the sabbath, were perfected. I only add another consideration, which is level to every capacity, and seems to carry irresistible conviction along with it. In the history of the first descent of the manna in the wilderness, which, as is well known, happened before Moses was called up to the mount, consequently before the law, which enjoins, among other moral duties, the celebration of the sabbath, was delivered; the observation of the sabbath is expressly mentioned, not as a new

institution,, but as an ordinance with which the Israelites had been long and familiarly acquainted. Exod. xvi. 23.

Ever, indeed, ought we to walk with God. In all our undertakings and actions we ought ultimately to aim at the advancement of his glory. But human nature, and the circumstances of the present state are such, as require a due proportion of our time to be, in a special manner, set apart for the more solemn service of our creating and redeeming God.

Did the sabbath obtain before the fall? Was it the first of all the primeval institutions? Has it obtained under every past dispensation? Has the church ever had, shall she ever have her sabbath? Does an eternal sabbatism remain to the saints of the most high in the better world? Is the sabbath, in the estimation of all saints, the best as it, now, is the first of the days of the week? What shall we think, what shall we say of ourselves, and of our cotemporaries? Was the sabbath ever treated with greater neglect and indignity than in the time and place in which we live? It, certainly, never was. To the basest of purposes is it, by multitudes, prostituted. What a weariness is it to many? To how few is it a pleasure?

Of the happy spot, which was assigned to man for his primeval residence, the sacred history gives us a particular description. *And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison; that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. Aud the name of the second*

river is Gihon; the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel; that is it that goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it, and to keep it. Gen. ii. 8—15. This place is usually called paradise, which, as is observed, is a name of Persic original, and signifies a delightful garden: the sacred history calls it Eden, which also denotes pleasure or delight. Concerning this once happy, but now deserted and unknown spot, numerous whimsical, ludicrous speculations have been formed. It has been pretended, that no local paradise ever existed; that the Mosaic description is not to be understood as a history, but as an allegory. It has been also supposed, that, before the fall, the state of the whole earth was paradisaical. Very different, doubtless, was the state of the earth before sin entered, from what it is now. Hence when the scripture foretels the final expulsion of sin from the world, and the total removal of the baneful effects of the curse, it describes that happy state which is to succeed, by terms manifestly borrowed from the Mosaic account of the primeval paradise. The river of the water of life, and the tree of life, which the apostle John introduces into his account of the celestial state, evidently allude to the description of the terrestrial paradise in the Mosaic history. But the history of Eden naturally suggests to us the idea of a particular spot. In what particular part of the earth this distinguished place was situated, is a point on which the curious part of mankind have been, and still are divided in their opinions. For it they have explored both heaven and earth. It has been, in imagination, found in the highest heaven, in the moon, in the middle regions of the air; in Asia, in Africa, in Europe, in America; in an unknown region, in the place now occupied by the Caspian sea; on the Ganges, on the Danube; in Chaldea, in Arme-

nia, in Mesopotamia, in Persia, in Arabia, in Ethiopia, in Palestine, in Syria, in the place where Damascus and Tripoli now stand; in Tartary, in the island of Ceylon in the East-Indies; in Sweden, and even under the arctic pole!

But though no spot could be found on earth exactly corresponding to the Mosaic description, we need not wonder; far less call in question the authenticity of the sacred history. From inundations, earthquakes, and various other causes, which I need not now enumerate, the terrestrial globe must have undergone very great alterations in the ages which are past. The opinion concerning the local situation of this celebrated spot, which is adopted by the generality of our best modern writers, is, that it was situated on the stream, which is formed by the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris. This great stream, below the spot on which the Almighty fixed for the primary residence of mankind, divides into two branches; which, after running a number of miles, fall into the Persian gulf. Thus, if we attend to the channels, rather than the current of the rivers, we shall find the number mentioned in the Mosaic history; the Euphrates on the west, and the Tigris or Hiddekel on the east, above the garden; and the Pison on the west, and the Gihon on the east, below it. On or at least very near this honoured spot, the celebrated city of Babylon was afterwards built; a city, which in regularity, extent, and beauty, never, perhaps, has been, nor ever will be equalled, in our world.

But why should we explore distant countries in search of a paradise, which now is no more? It is a certain, a melancholy truth, that paradise has been lost; and is not, in the present state of things, to be regained. Not to be regained did I say! I retract; paradise, if not the terrestrial, the celestial has been regained. The second Adam, the Lord from heaven, *restores what he took not away*. The first Adam, by one

criminal act, offended his Maker and ruined the whole human race. From the mediatorial undertaking and work of the second Adam, result the highest glory to God, and the highest happiness to man.

For the extension of the penal consequences of the criminal behaviour of the first man, to his numerous posterity, the federal transaction between his Almighty Maker and him will fully account. It has pleased God all along to transact with man in a federal manner. The federal transaction between God and man, of which the Mosaic history informs us, was suited to the nature and circumstances of the primeval state. That God did enter into a covenant with innocent Adam, as the federal head of his whole natural posterity, I shall have occasion, in the systematical department of this work, to prove. The justice, propriety, and benignity of this dispensation I shall attempt to evince. In the history of the primeval state we have a hint, and only a hint, of the covenant made with the first Adam, the violation of which occasioned the ruin of the whole human family. In the history of the fall we have only a hint, of that superior covenant, which, before all worlds, was made with the second Adam, by the fulfilment of which the redemption of the church of the first born, is effected. The revelation of both these important transactions is, in the subsequent scriptures, gradually amplified and completed.

The essential parts of a proper covenant are two; a conditionary, to be performed by the one contracting party; and a promissory, to be accomplished by the other. The sanction or penalty of any covenant is adventitious and accidental; arising from the fallibility of the person with whom it is made. That all-glorious person, the second Adam, with whom the covenant of redemption was made, is infallible, and, therefore, the supposition of a penalty, in the event of his failure, is preposterous and absurd. The first Adam, with whom the covenant of works

was made, was, indeed, a perfect; but still, he was a fallible, man.

It is not at all unusual, in scripture, to put a part for the whole; or to express one thing and leave another to be understood. In this original discovery of the covenant of works two of its parts are mentioned; the one an essential, the other the accidental part. Here we have a prohibition and a commination. The prohibition is, *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it.* The commination follows, *for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* The all-comprehending duty incumbent on man then, and incumbent on him still, is to perform all known duty, and avoid all known sin. One sin only is expressly mentioned; others are not excluded; but included. Abstinence from the fruit of the prohibited tree was chosen to be the grand criterion of man's obedience. No necessity, no excuse, could he plead for transgressing. Heaven had granted to him the richest profusion of all things necessary and conducive to his happiness in soul and body. He was, at once, allured and alarmed. In the fullest manner was he apprised of the happy consequences of obedience, and of the direful effects of disobedience. Had he universal authority and dominion over all things below? It was, certainly, fit that he should be laid under one small restriction; that he might ever be reminded, that he was a dependent being.

Has the new covenant visible seals annexed to each dispensation of it? The old covenant may also be said to have had its seals. Thus many have interpreted the history of the two famous trees in Paradise, the one known by the name of the tree of life, the other affirmed to be the tree of the knowlegdege of good and evil. Concerning these two trees many questions have been proposed, and various conjectures have been formed.

(To be continued.)

LITERATURE.

A demonstration of the Being and Perfections of God, from a brief survey of the Heavens and the Earth; including a general sketch of Astronomy, Geography, Natural History, Natural Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, &c.

A VERY pious writer, well known in the religious world, has observed, that the most high God, in condescension to the weakness of our faculties, the brevity of our lives, and our many avocations, has comprised all the knowledge conducive to our real happiness, in four volumes; the bible, the book of creation, the book of Providence, and the book of the heart.

That path of life, which the greater part of Christians are appointed to tread, allows but little opportunity for philosophical researches; and the little leisure they enjoy, is more properly devoted to the study of the book of grace, than that of the book of nature. But a sketch of Christian philosophy, calculated to elevate the mind to high and honourable thoughts of God, must, to Christians, even in the lowest circles of life, be acceptable and useful. It has been observed, that the lines of the book of creation, though in themselves beautiful and expressive, are not obvious to fallen man. The works of creation have been compared to a fair character in cypher, of which the bible is the key. They who know God in his word, can trace him, and his perfections and designs, in his works. It is observed by the inspired writer of the

nineteenth psalm, *that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.* To this observation of the devout psalmist, agree the words of the apostle Paul, *the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head.* Nothing, says a sensible writer, can be more becoming man, than to investigate the works of Deity, with *this* design, that he may excite in himself those devout affections, and that superlative respect, which are the very essence of that praise, which is his reasonable and religious service. Are we disposed to employ ourselves in the delightful duty of praise? The means and the motives are both at hand. His works present themselves to men of every clime and condition, to the savage and the sage, in a wonderful, an instructive, an entertaining variety. How admirable the plan, how inimitable the execution!

Under the denomination of the heavens and the earth, we comprehend all the known parts of creation. The science, which describes the appearances, the magnitudes, the distances, the motions, &c. of the heavenly bodies, we call astronomy; and that which describes the figure, the dimensions, the revolutions, the divisions, &c. of the earth, we call geography.

The history of the origin of the noble science of astronomy, and of its progress in early times, is involved in no small obscurity, and has occasioned a great variety of speculations and conjectures; the canvassing of which could not afford either much information or amusement. The antiquity, as well as the utility of it, the Deity has been understood to intimate, when concerning the heavenly luminaries, he spake thus; *Let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.* Adam, in his state of innocence, we are informed by the Jewish Rabbins, had an extensive knowledge of astronomy. The inhabi-

tants of the antediluvian world, particularly Seth and his posterity, Josephus tells us, were acquainted with this science. The longevity of the patriarchs afforded them singular advantages and opportunities for making astronomical observations. At the dispersion occasioned by the confusion of languages, at the building of the Tower of Babel, Noah, we are told, retired with the children, who were born to him after the flood, into the north-eastern parts of Asia, and introduced the knowledge of astronomy into those countries. In this manner writers account for the early cultivation of the sciences in China, Siam, Japan, the dominions of the great Mogul, and other parts of the east. In the western world, as well as the eastern, among the Americans as well as the Asiatics, particularly the natives of Mexico, writers have found sufficient proofs of an acquaintance with astronomy. But, there are especially two countries, which, in ancient times, were distinguished and famed for the cultivation of this sublime science; Chaldea and Egypt. Both these countries, it has been observed, were exceedingly proper for making astronomical observations, on account of the purity and serenity of their air. The temple of Belus, which was of an extraordinary height, it is said, was used as an astronomical observatory; and the lofty pyramids of Egypt, whatever may have been the original design of them, might answer the same purpose. For a proof of the early study of astronomy among the Chaldeans, it has been observed, Alexander the Great, when he entered Babylon, found, upon inquiry, astronomical observations, some of which had been made about two thousand years before. This noble study, the patriarch Abraham, who was a native of Chaldea, is supposed to have, in an eminent manner, promoted. The knowledge collected from the traditional history of creation, the contemplation of the heavens and the earth, the experience of preceding generations, and the various gradual discoveries of the attributes and purposes of

the Deity, which had been, by the long-lived patriarchs, transmitted from age to age; he, no doubt, was solicitous to diffuse among his cotemporaries. In the contemplation and study of the works of creation and Providence, the devout part of mankind, of every age and country, have found equal profit and pleasure. Does it not seem to have been the constant practice of the patriarch Isaac, at every approach of night, and re-appearance of the heavenly luminaries, to retire to the field for contemplation? *Isaac*, says the sacred historian, *went out to meditate in the field at the eventide.* Was it not a view of the starry heavens that suggested to the devout Jewish monarch, the following pious ejaculations; *When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained,* can I forbear to exclaim, Lord, *what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Celebrating the wonders of creation, the sweet psalmist of Israel elsewhere sings thus—*To him who alone doeth great wonders—to him that by wisdom made the heavens—to him that made great lights; the sun to rule by day; the moon and stars to rule by night.*

From Chaldea or Egypt, or perhaps both, the study of astronomy passed into Phenicia, and from Phenicia to Greece. The period, at which this science was first cultivated among the Greeks, cannot be ascertained. Intimations of it, however, occur in the writings of Hesiod and Homer, who flourished almost nine hundred years before the Christian era. It was greatly improved by Thales, the Milesian, whose reputation for astronomical knowledge was raised to the highest pitch, by foretelling an eclipse, the arrival of which was attended with memorable circumstances. Especially was the astronomy of the Greeks improved and enriched by the discoveries of Pythagoras. This celebrated astronomer and mathematician, is believed to have been born in the island of Samos, and to have flourished about five hundred years before Christ. In

search of knowledge, he, it is said, travelled into Egypt, then celebrated for the study of the sciences, where he became acquainted with geography, and the true solar system, and made himself master of the several branches of learning, for which that country was so famed among the nations of antiquity. Incited by an insatiable thirst for knowledge, he, we are told, afterwards visited Persia, Chaldea, and other parts of Asia, as far as India, where he conversed with the Gymosophists, and, from them, acquired the knowledge of the philosophy and literature of the east. This great philosopher taught that the earth was of a spherical or round figure; that the moon reflected the rays of the sun; and that the comets are wandering stars, disappearing in the superior part of their orbits, and becoming visible only in the lower. He is said also to have exhibited the oblique course of the sun in the ecliptic; and to have first taught that the planet Venus is both the evening and the morning star. But rational and philosophical, as the theory of Pythagoras was, it was universally reprobated, and speedily consigned to a state of oblivion.

Concerning the structure of the universe, the ancients, in general, entertained the most erroneous ideas. The Ptolemaic system almost universally prevailed. That the earth is an extended plain, surrounded by the ocean; that the sun, when he sets, dips into the western ocean; and, when he rises, emerges from the eastern; that the sun, the moon, and the stars, are small luminous bodies, at no great distance from the earth, and created solely for the purpose of illuminating it, was, for many ages, and among many nations, a prevailing opinion. Though, how to ascertain on what foundation the earth rested, or how to account for the velocity with which the heavenly luminaries seemed to move round it, they knew not. For a long series of ages, Europe continued in ignorance of astronomy, as well as of the other sciences. The revival of astronomical studies, some have dated from

the times of the emperor Frederick, who, in the thirteenth century, caused the astronomical treatise of Ptolemy, to be translated into Latin. Is it not a strong intimation of the utility of philosophy, and its subservience to the advancement of religion, that the revival of the former, and the reformation of the latter, happened almost at one time? Important, indeed, is the superstructure, which our modern philosophers have raised upon that noble foundation, which the great Bacon, upwards of two hundred years ago, began to lay. The honour of restoring and establishing the true solar system, belongs, in a peculiar manner, to Copernicus, a native of Thorn, born in the year 1472. All the books written by philosophers and astronomers, which could be found, he collected and perused; and all the various hypotheses they had inivented for the solution of the celestial phenomena, he examined. The result was a firm persuasion, that the only true system was the Pythagorean; which makes the sun to be the centre, and the earth to move, not only round the sun, but also round its own axis. After twenty years spent in contemplating the phenomena of the heavens, in making mathematical calculations, in examining the observations of the ancients, and in making new ones of his own, he fully established that system of the universe, which now goes by his name, and is universally received by scientific men of all nations. Greatly has the science of astronomy been improved by the invention and use of telescopes. This improvement is attributed to Galileo, a famous mathematician and astronomer, the son of a Florentine nobleman, born in the year 1564. Though it does not appear that he originally invented, he, doubtless, improved the invention of telescopes, and applied them to astronomical purposes. Especially has modern astronomy been improved, enriched, and confirmed by the discoveries and experiments of that prodigy of mathematical knowledge, the incomparable Sir Isaac Newton.

Modern discoveries, in the sublime science of astronomy, have opened prospects, which, at once, astonish and delight to a degree which words are unable to express. The most obvious distribution of those heavenly bodies, which we commonly call stars, is into two classes; permanent and planetary; fixed and wandering. The former are usually, by way of eminence, called stars; the latter, planets. The stars, on account of their apparent unequal magnitudes, are divided into six classes; called stars of the first; stars of the second; stars of the third; stars of the fourth; stars of the fifth; and stars of the sixth magnitude. Of the stars some are visible to the naked eye; others are discovered only by the assistance of glasses, called telescopes. The latter have, on this account, been called telescopical stars. An ordinary telescope is said to discover, in several parts of the heavens, ten times as many stars as can be seen by the naked eye. The apparent unequal magnitudes of the stars, are, probably, owing to their unequal distances. To a person at the nearest star, our sun would, probably, appear no larger than that star does to us.

At such immense distances are the stars from us, that, it is supposed, a ball shot from a loaded cannon, and flying with undiminished velocity, would travel several hundred thousand years before it could reach the nearest of them. As several stars have become visible only of late years, it is apprehended, that there may be stars at such immense distances, that though they have been in the heavens, and emitting light for almost six thousand years, and light flies at the rate of ten millions of miles in a minute, their light has not yet reached our world. Agreeably to all this, it has been observed, that were an inhabitant of our earth to travel toward the cope of heaven, and to advance in his ærial journey an hundred and sixty millions of miles; even in that advanced situation, he could not perceive the smallest visible difference in the apparent magnitude of the stars. Nor is this a mere supposition; it

is a certain fact. At the time of the winter solstice, that is, about the twenty-first of December, we are upwards of an hundred and sixty millions of miles nearer to the northern parts of the sky, than we are at the time of the summer solstice, or about the twenty-first of June; and yet, with regard to the stars, situated in that quarter, we perceive neither change in their aspect, nor augmentation of their magnitude. The discoveries of modern philosophers have rendered it, in a high degree, probable, that creation consists of as many systems, or worlds, as there are fixed stars; and that each of the fixed stars is the centre of a particular system or world, imparting light and heat to that system and the several planetary bodies which compose it; as our sun does to the earth, and the other opaque bodies which compose our system, or world; and which, for this reason, is usually known by the name of the solar system. Hear I cannot forbear to transcribe the truly emphatical words of the very pious, learned, and elegant Hervey. "Could we," says he, "soar beyond the moon, and pass through all the planetary choir; could we wing our way to the highest apparent star, and take our stand on one of those loftiest pinnacles of heaven; we would there see other skies expanded, another sun, other stars, and other, perhaps, nobler systems, established through the boundless dimensions of space. Even at the end of this vast tour, we would find ourselves advanced no farther than the suburbs of creation, and arrived only at the frontiers of the great Jehovah's kingdom."

That part of the vast universe to which we belong, and to which our knowledge is almost wholly confined, called the Pythagorean, the Copernican, the Newtonian, the solar system, consists of the sun, as the common centre of it, and a number of opaque bodies, called planets and comets, which, in certain orbits, perform their periodical revolutions around the sun. The several known parts of this system, I shall briefly survey.

(To be continued.)

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

Evidences in favour of Christianity.

THAT, in the Augustan age, there flourished, in Judea, an extraordinary person, called Jesus Christ, is a fact better authenticated and supported, than that there lived such men as Cyrus, Alexander, or Julius Cæsar. There are more historical monuments to attest his existence and character, and infinitely more numerous and incontestible vestiges in the present day, to prove that there was such a person as Christ, than that there lived in past ages, such potent monarchs or illustrious conquerors. Is it certain that Christianity now exists in the world? no less certain is it that Jesus Christ once lived in it.

Many of the public monuments, which the renowned heroes of antiquity left behind them, have long since perished. Their magnificent palaces, their temples, their mausoleums, their opulent cities, are no more. Few are the remaining visible traces of the battles they fought, the empires they established, the laws they enacted, and the universal devastation they once spread around them. The kingdoms they conquered have, by the universal instability of human condition, undergone many revolutions, have gained and lost their liberty, and experienced all those reverses to which terrestrial glory is subjected. The curious traveller explores large regions in search of standing records of the greatness of former princes; traverses immense countries, once the seat of science and liberty, now the abode of barbarism and slavery; once swarming with inhabitants, now a dreary, inhospitable solitude; he searches,

but in vain, for cities and temples and palaces in the very situation where they once stood. Babylon is now fallen! Persepolis and Ecbatana are no more! Long have travellers disputed, without ascertaining, the site of ancient Nineveh, *that exceeding great city of three days journey*. Few are the remaining signatures, in Asia-Minor or in Judea, of Alexander's victorious arms. Few are the standing memorials in Gaul or in Britain, to evince that there was such a person as Julius Cæsar, who subdued the one, and invaded the other.

But that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who lived, died and rose again, and founded a spiritual empire of religion, is an important fact, which the visible state of almost all Europe, and a considerable part of America, not to speak of other countries, sufficiently evinces. The customs and usages of every nation necessarily imply a cause and reason, to which they owe their existence, and suppose a date from which they commence. Religious institutions so extensively received, and religious solemnities so extensively celebrated, lead the inquiring mind through past ages to the period at which they began, to the person who established them, and the source from which they originally flow. Do we see numbers of great and populous kingdoms, however they differ in other things, agreed in baptising their offspring in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy-Ghost; in commemorating their divine Redeemer by the sacred memorials of bread and wine; in appropriating the first day of the week statedly to his solemn worship? How shall we account for institutions so extensively received and practised? Were they instituted in the present age? Did they commence in the times of our immediate ancestors? No, we can trace the sacred stream to its source. We can recur to times in which no such usages were known; times in which the Christian institution had not commenced; in which Judaism and Paganism overspread *the whole* inhabited world. Do the present state of the Jews, their tenets, their ceremonial observances,

their peculiar customs, their dispersion into *all the nations* of the world, yet remaining a distinct, separate body, through all the infinite changes and revolutions, that affect kingdoms and communities, furnish an incontestible proof, that there existed such a person as Moses, the famous Jewish lawgiver? And does not the evidence, that arises from the visible state of the Christian world, irrefragably prove, that there lived and died in Judea, that extraordinary person, whom we call Jesus Christ; who was born in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, and suffered under Pontius Pilate; and by whom Christianity was introduced, and established in the world?

(To be Continued occasionally.)

The Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen.

I INTEND, in the subsequent numbers of this work, to review, occasionally, the several missions, which have been employed, by Christians of various denominations, for spreading the gospel among the nations of mankind, in both the eastern and the western hemisphere. I shall now, for an introduction, lay before my readers the following hints relative to the subject.

The church, during the first ages of the world, seems to have subsisted in a sort of domestic state; confined to a few detached families. The ordinances of her worship were, probably, few, and the number of her members small. Neither does she seem to have had any stated governors or officers. The patriarchal heads of families, probably, officiated as her teachers and priests. This, in all probability, was the state of the church for about two thousand and five hundred years. When the Hebrew tribes left Egypt the church assumed a more public form, and, for about fifteen

hundred years, subsisted in a national capacity. Her ordinances and her officers, during this period, were exceedingly numerous. Still, however, she was almost totally confined to one nation, and within the boundaries of a country of very small extent. But, as the first fruits and certain pledges of an approaching conversion of the nations to the faith, and the service of the great Redeemer, individuals from among the neighbouring nations were, time after time, proselyted to the Jewish religion: and, it has been observed, that, in the ages which immediately preceded the introduction of the gospel state, converts, from among the Gentiles, were more numerous than in former times.

Even the personal ministry of the Messiah was chiefly confined to the Jews. Thus he speaks, *I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* When he first sent forth his apostles to preach he delivered to them this charge, *go not in the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Still, however, he gave repeated presages of the future spread of the gospel among the Gentiles. Gallilee, the inhabitants of which were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, he favoured with a share of his personal ministry. With the Syro-Phenicians and the Greeks he had occasional intercourse. On his arrival in our world certain eastern sages embraced the earliest opportunity of doing homage to him. Now an ancient prediction received its initial accomplishment, *the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.*

Having, by his obediential life and expiatory death, overthrown the partition-wall, which had, for a long series of ages, divided Jews and Gentiles, the glorious Redeemer, in the interval between his resurrection and ascension, renewed, and, in the most extensive manner, amplified the commission to his apostles. In terms the most universal and unlimited does this second commission run; *Go ye*, says he, *into all the world*,

preach the gospel to every creature, that is, every human being, without distinction of country or condition. Among the Jews man was, by way of eminence, called *the* creature. With what fidelity and with what success the apostles executed this important and salutary commission, I shall, in the progress of this work, have occasion to shew.

Is it asked, Why was the knowledge of the Messiah, for between two and three thousand years, restricted to a few families; and, for fifteen hundred years more, confined to one small nation? Suffice it to say, that it seems to be the intention of the Deity, all whose designs are wise and good, to proceed, in all his works of creation, providence, and grace, in a gradual and progressive manner. Each succeeding dispensation has been superior to that which preceded it. The Mosaic economy excelled the partriarchal administration; and the Christian institution, in extent and perspicuity, far excells the Jewish dispensation. The gospel state, in nature as well as in time, approaches nearer to the heavenly state, than any other dispensation with which the church on earth has been favoured. But even this last and best dispensation admits of a mysterious and glorious progression. Extensive was the spread of the gospel that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, and the final dispersion of the Jews. More extensive still is the spread of it in later times. The gospel has been preached and Christian churches have been organized in countries, which, to the apostles and their cotemporaries, were totally unknown. And, in the ages which are to come, Christianity is to be propagated to an extent, that will incomparably surpass every thing we have seen, and even all the great and glorious things of which our godly forefathers have told us. For, as our Lord himself foretels, *this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then*, and not till then, *shall the end come.* Matt. xxiv. 14. If we consult the places of the new testament, in which the expression, *the end*, occurs,

we shall find, that it denotes, chiefly, two grand events; the one of which is already past, the other is not yet come. It refers immediately to the destruction of Jerusalem, the final dispersion of the Jews, and abolition of the Jewish polity, both civil and ecclesiastical. This dreadful catastrophe happened, agreeably to our Lord's prediction, about forty years after his ascension. Prior to this memorable event the gospel was propagated, and Christian churches organized in various parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Converts, conformably to another prediction, were collected from India in *the east*, and Spain, or, perhaps, Britain in *the west;* from Scythia in *the north*, and Ethiopia in *the south;* and from the various intermediate countries. Such was the rapid progress, such the glorious success, which the gospel, notwithstanding the united opposition of Jews and Pagans, had in the first ages of Christianity.

The expression, *the end*, ultimately refers to an event, which, though long expected, has not yet arrived; that tremendous event, of which we are all to be spectators, and in which we are to be most intimately concerned, the end of the world, the general resurrection, and the last judgment. Prior to this final catastrophe the gospel is to be preached from the northern pole to the southern, and from the eastern to the western shore; or, as the prediction expresses it, *in all the* inhabited *world*, whether continent or island, *for a witness to all nations* of mankind. In the compendious account I am to give of the Christian church I shall have occasion to follow religion in its progress, in the past ages of the New Testament, through various countries of Asia and Africa, all, or almost all, Europe, and some part of America. What I principally intend here, is, to inform my readers, in a summary manner, of the missions, which Christians, of various denominations have employed for the truly laudable purpose of spreading the gospel among the heathen, in later times; especially since the commencement of the eighteenth cen-

tury. To the friends of religion this subject is of the highest importance and concern. If we have an interest in the Saviour, we cannot, possibly, be totally unconcerned whether others have an interest in him or not. That truly generous spirit, which the apostle of the Gentiles breathes, must, in some degree, actuate us. He said, and each of us must be disposed to say, *my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel*, and for mankind, *is, that they may be saved.* At an early period did the vocation of the Gentiles begin to be foretold. From the times of Abraham, I might have said Noah, to the period in which we live, has it been, time after time, predicted. But, for reasons best known to the wise Disposer of all things, it has hitherto been, in a great measure, delayed. Melancholy to all the friends of religion is the recollection, that the enlightened part of the world still bears but a small proportion to the unenlightened part. Geographers have divided the world of mankind, comprehending about nine hundred and fifty millions of human beings, into thirty equal parts; and calculated, that, of these, nineteen are Pagan idolators; five Mahometans; and six Christians, of the eastern and western churches, Greeks, Catholics, and Protestants. A late writer computes the present inhabitants of the earth, at only eight hundred millions; of whom he supposes four hundred and eighty-one millions still in a state of Heathenism; one hundred and forty millions Mahometans; nine millions Jews; and only one hundred and seventy millions Christians. Of these, ninety millions are Catholics; thirty millions Greeks and Armenians; and only fifty millions Protestants. Melancholy reflection! But, if the subject has a dark side, it also has a bright. What glorious prospects do the promises and prophecies, Jewish and Christian, open! Does not the present aspect of Providence encourage us to entertain the pleasing hope, that the period is now at hand, in which the kingdoms of our world are to become the kingdom of

our Lord Jesus Christ, in an extent unknown in all former ages of the earth?

The question, whether the darkness at our Saviour's Crucifixion was natural, or preternatural and miraculous, considered.

OF this remarkable phenomenon three of the four evangelical historians take particular notice. *From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.* Matt. xxvii. 45. *When the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.* Mark xv. 33. *And it was about the sixth hour and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.* Luke xxiii. 44. At an early period was the evangelical history published to the world. It is a plain, simple, artless relation of facts. Neither Jews nor Pagans, notwithstanding their united and unrelenting opposition to the Messiah's person, religion, and followers, presumed to contradict or even controvert it. In many of the incidents, which it relates, it is corroborated by various other writers. By the two famous Roman historians, Tacitus and Suetonius, we are informed, that, at the time of our Saviour's birth, there prevailed, not only over all Judea, but the other eastern countries, a general expectation, that a person was immediately to appear, who was to be governor of the world. That there lived in Judea, at the time to which the gospel history refers, such a person as Jesus of Nazareth, is universally admitted both by Jews and Pagans. The star that appeared at his birth, and the visit he received from the wise men of the east, are mentioned by Chalcidius the Platonist. The slaughter of the children of Bethlehem, by Herod, and the censure past upon him, on that account, by Augustus the emperor, are related by Macrobius. Many of

the miracles, which Jesus performed, are acknowledged by those most virulent and implacable enemies of Christianity, Celsus and Julian; as well as by the authors of the Jewish Talmud. That the power of the Pagan deities ceased at the coming of Christ, though he attributes this to their taking offence at the setting up of the Christian religion, which he ignorantly charges with impiety and profaneness, is expressly allowed by Porphyry. The crucifixion of Jesus under Pontius Pilate, Tacitus has recorded. The crucifixion, with the earthquake, and the concomitant darkness, are said to have been admitted into the public Roman records; to which the first advocates for the Christian cause appealed, and which their adversaries did not pretend to deny.

The chief question relative to the darkness, that attended the crucifixion of the Messiah, is, whether it was natural or miraculous. Certain persons have imagined, that this darkness was occasioned by a total natural eclipse of the sun. If this was the case, there was nothing preternatural or extraordinary in it. But such a supposition discovers gross ignorance of astronomy, and particularly the nature of eclipses. To all who are, in any measure, instructed in the sublime science of astronomy, it is well known, that such an eclipse of the sun can happen only at the time of new moon; and such a darkness, occasioned by it, cannot possibly continue longer than four, or, at most, five minutes. But the evangelical historians inform us, that the crucifixion happened at the time of the full moon; and continued for no less than three hours, that is, according to the Jewish reckoning, from the sixth to the ninth hour. The crucifixion happened at the time of celebrating the passover, and the celebration of the passover was invariably held, not at the time of the new, but at the time of the full moon; when, according to the established laws of the heavenly bodies, there could be no natural eclipse of the sun. The Jews had a twofold year; a civil and a sacred. The latter commenced at

their departure from Egypt; and was reckoned from one vernal equinox to another. This regulated all their religious festivals. They computed their months by the course of the moon; the first day of the moon, or, the first day on which she was visible, being the first day of the month. The month, called in the old Testament Abib or Nisan, corresponding to the latter part of our March and the former part of our April, was the first month of their sacred year. On the tenth day of this month the paschal lamb was taken from the flock; on the evening of the fourteenth, when the moon was full, the lamb was slain, and the passover-feast celebrated. The law relative to this festival is most explicit, Exod. xii. Was the first of the moon to the Jews, the first day of the month? Was the celebration of the passover expressly confined to the fourteenth day of the month? Then ever must it have been kept at the time of the full moon; the time at which a natural eclipse of the sun never did, never can happen. Agreeably to what I have now said, Josephus, the celebrated Jewish historian, informs us, that the passover was statedly observed on the fourteenth day of the month Nisan, according to the moon, when the sun was in the sign Aries; and that the sun enters this sign at the time of the vernal equinox, is well known.

It has been observed, that in order that darkness occasioned by a natural eclipse of the sun may continue for three hours, the moon's motion in her orbit, and the earth's motion on her axis, must be, for three hours, totally suspended. It is added, that, in this case, if the power of gravitation be not suspended, the moon must fall a great way toward the earth. Thus the supposition that this extraordinary darkness was owing to a natural eclipse of the sun, is big with absurdity; and, instead of one, implies three miracles.

Upon the whole, is the order of the heavenly bodies such, that a natural eclipse of the sun can happen only at the time of new moon; as an eclipse of the moon can happen only when she is full? Did the darkness,

that attended the crucifixion, happen at the time of full moon? Then is it certain to a demonstration, that it could not possibly be natural.

Is it pretended, as the last subterfuge, that this darkness was occasioned by a comet passing between the sun and the earth? The continuance of the darkness, for three hours, forbids such a supposition.

No wonder that the crucifixion of the Lord of glory was attended with circumstances extraordinary and unparalleled. Such another event never did, never will happen. Do any hesitate concerning the evil or the danger of sin? Let them repair to Calvary, and view the son of God, suffering and satisfying for it; suspended between the heavens and the earth; as if unworthy of a place either in the former or the latter; a spectacle to God, to angels, to devils, and to men! No wonder though the sun refused to shine; though the earth shook to her centre; though the rocks rent, and the graves were opened!

A memorable Instance of the special *kindness of Providence, to a pious Family reduced to very necessitous Circumstances.*

THE inspired writer of one of those psalms, the subject of which is that all-superintending Providence, which, though it extends to every creature, is, in a peculiar manner, employed about the children of God in the world, speaks, from observation, thus, *I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* Psal. xxxvii, 25. Among numerous other instances, in which Providence has, in a signal manner, interposed in behalf of the godly in perilous times, and trying circumstances, the following deserves to be transmitted to posterity.

The reverend David Anderson had been a minister at Walton, upon Thames, but, along with many other worthy ministers, was ejected by the infamous Bartholomew act, 1662.

This good man, soon after his ejectment, crossed the seas, went into Zealand, and settled in Middleburgh, with his wife and five small children. Having no employment he soon consumed the little money he had carried over with him; owed a year's rent for his house, and was reduced to the want of the very necessaries of life. Yet such was his modesty, that he could not prevail with himself to make his case known in that strange land. In this condition, after he had been one morning at prayer with his family, his children asked some bread for their breakfast; but having neither bread, nor money to buy any, they all burst into tears. In this crisis of distress, the bell at the door rang; and Mrs. Anderson, in a mean habit, went to see who was there. The person that rung the bell, asked for the mistress. She answered, that her name was Anderson. Here, says he, a gentleman has sent you this paper; and will send you some provisions presently. When they had opened the paper, they found forty pieces of gold in it. The messenger, on delivering the paper, went away without telling his name, or whence he came. Soon after came a countryman with a load of flesh, fish, herbs, bread, and other necessary things. Neither did he tell whence he came; nor did they to their dying day know who sent him. However, the reverend John Quick, from whose memoirs this account is taken, being, in 1681, pastor of the English Church in Middleburgh, came, in an accidental manner, to the knowledge of the whole matter. For, as he was at the country house of Mijn Heer de Koning, a magistrate of that city, and happened to mention that story, M. de Koning told him that he was the person who carried the gold from Mijn Heer de Hoste, a pious merchant of that place with whom he was then an apprentice. He added, that Mijn Heer de Hoste, observing a grave English mi-

nister walk the streets frequently, with a dejected countenance, was secretly impelled by the good providence and spirit of God, to inquire into his circumstances, and, apprehending he was in want, sent him the gold by M. de Koning, and the provisions by his country servant, saying, God forbid, that any of Christ's embassadors should be strangers, and we not visit them; or in distress, and we not relieve them. But he expressly charged both his servants not to discover his name. This providential relief, besides present provision, enabled good Mr. Anderson to pay his debts. This signal instance of the great goodness of God he could not forbear to communicate to his religious friends and acquaintance. This coming to the ears of M. de Hoste, he afterwards found a secret way of paying Mr. Anderson's rent for him yearly; and conveying to him, besides, ten pounds sterling every quarter, which he managed in such a manner, that Mr. Anderson never did or could know his benefactor. M. de Koning kept the whole matter secret, as long as his master lived, but thought himself at liberty to give this account after his death.

Upon the death of Mr. Spang, minister of the English church in Middleburgh, Mr. Anderson was unexpectedly chosen in his stead. When the messenger came from the church to acquaint him with it, his wife was so over-borne with joy, at the goodness of God, in providing for them a station of utility and honour, and a maintenance certain and adequate to their wants, that it threw her into a fever, of which she died. Mr. Anderson did not survive her long. The lords of the city became guardians to the five orphans he left behind him. The famous Anna Maria Shurman took one of his daughters, and two other Dutch gentlewomen the two others, and became mothers to them. M. de Hoste, took his two sons under his own charge, and, by his last will, bequeathed a good portion to each of his daughters. He ordered that the eldest son, who was very pious, should be brought up a scholar, and settled upon him sixty pounds sterling per annum, for his education at

one of their universities. The youngest he appointed to be bound apprentice; and, when he should be out of his time, to receive sixty pounds sterling to begin the world with. Thus Providence not only provided, in an extraordinary and unexpected manner, for that good man and faithful minister of Jesus Christ; but continued its special favour to his children after him. *Whoso are wise and will observe these things; even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*

Anecdote of the celebrated Mr. Hervey.

THIS truly great man happened once to travel in company with a lady, who chose to introduce, as the topic of conversation, the advantages and the exquisite pleasure which, she said, theatrical entertainments, in prospect and recollection, as well as during the time of performance, afforded her. After she had for some time expatiated on the subject, with great fluency, the good man accosted her to this effect. Madam, you have enumerated many of the advantages and pleasures you receive from theatrical entertainments; but one material thing has escaped you. Pray, sir, replied she, what is that? It is, madam, said he, the exquisite pleasure that your reflections on the theatre will afford you on a death-bed, and in your departing moments. This well-meant sarcasm, under the direction of Providence, and through the agency of the divine Spirit, had a most happy effect. It made an immediate and lasting impression on the lady's mind, and proved the blessed occasion and mean of her conversion to religion, and infinitely superior pleasures; to which, amidst all her gaieties, amusements, and joys, she had, till then, been an utter stranger. This interesting incident has been beautifully versified in the following lines, which appeared in an early number of the Evangelical Magazine.

" How great my pleasures at the play!
A lady once was heard to say.
Amusement surely all divine!
Be such amusements always mine.
First, there's the joy I always know,
Before the hour arrives, to go;
And when I'm there—but who can say
What are my raptures at the play?
Besides, the recollected joy
Next day affords me sweet employ."
" That may be true," a friend reply'd,
" But is there *not one* joy beside?
You have not mentioned—tell me why,
The joy of plays when call'd—to die!
Perhaps a thunder bolt from heav'n
Might then have less confusion giv'n.
The gay young lady felt the smart,
Conviction seiz'd her wounded heart!
No more she boasts her former joys,
Religion now her thoughts employs.
False pleasures can no more amuse,
Superior bliss she now pursues.
" O happy change!" she says, and tells you why,
Religion's joys will last, when call'd—to die."

A brief Sketch of the Birth, Life, and Death of the Apostle Paul.

THIS eminent apostle, commonly called the apostle of the Gentiles, is, in the New-Testament, known both by his Hebrew name Saul, and his Roman name Paul. He was by birth, as well as profession, a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, and of the sect of the pharisees. He was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia, a country of Asia Minor. He had a sister, married at Jerusalem, whose son was of eminent service to him,

during his sufferings for religion in that city. Of a number of his kinsmen, who embraced the Christian religion, he makes express mention, in the conclusion of his epistle to the Romans. He, in early life, enjoyed singular advantages for the literary and religious culture and improvement of his mind. Tarsus, the place of his nativity, is said to have been, at that time, the most celebrated school in the world; and, for polite literature, to have equalled, if not surpassed, Athens and Alexandria. From Strabo, who lived in that age, the following account of it has been copied. "The inhabitants of this place cherish such a passion for philosophy, and all the various branches of polite literature, that they have greatly exceeded Athens and Alexandria, and every other place, in which there are schools and academies for philosophy and erudition. But Tarsus differs in this, that those who here devote themselves to the study of literature, are almost all natives of the country—there are not many from foreign parts who reside here. Nor do the natives of the country continue here for life, but they go abroad to finish their studies, and, when they have perfected themselves, they choose to live in other places: there are but few who return home." This observation of the historian is exemplified in the subsequent history of our apostle. After giving a list of several eminent men, who, as philosophers, orators, poets, professors of the belles lettres, flourished in this city, Strabo concludes his account in the following words. "But Rome can best witness the great number of learned men, the natives of this city; for it is full of learned men from Tarsus and Alexandria." In this city, so celebrated for philosophy and science, Paul went through a course of Greek learning, and acquired an acquaintance with its most elegant writers, whom we find him sometimes quoting. Having finished a course of liberal education in this city, he travelled abroad to perfect himself in the various branches of useful learning. His thirst for knowledge seems to have been very great. He appears to have been a man of the finest talents; of

quick apprehension, great vivacity, and of signal resolution. From Tarsus he removed to Jerusalem, to study under Gamaliel, an eminent Jewish doctor, under whose tuition he made an uncommon proficiency in the knowledge of the law, and the acquisition of Rabbinical literature. Here he imbibed the strongest prepossessions in favour of the Mosaic constitution, and the fullest conviction of its authority. His violent zeal for the religion of his ancestors instigated him to attempt, by every possible method, to crush the new-born cause of Christianity in its very infancy. Prompted by this violent precipitance, to which his veneration for the law transported him, he gave his ready suffrage for the death of the proto-martyr, Stephen, and kept the clothes of those who stripped themselves to embrue their hands in his blood. Thus blind, injudicious zeal hurried him on to the last extravagances against the Christians. The professors of that religion he pursued every where with the most implacable fury; forcibly entering private houses, and, with unfeeling rage, dragging persons of every age, and of every sex, to prison. His moral character, in other respects, was unexceptionable. For the sincerity and probity of his heart, he could appeal to God himself. He, as he himself afterwards informs us, acted ignorantly and in unbelief. Accordingly, in his mad and sanguinary career, he was not permitted to persist long. Concerning him, God had gracious designs, and the season of their accomplishment was at hand. Judea being too narrow to circumscribe his zeal for persecuting the Christians, he went to the high priest, and desired of him a commission to empower him to suppress the obnoxious cause in other parts. This bloody mandate he easily obtained. In pursuance of it he immediately set out for Damascus; breathing destruction to the whole Christian name. But, as he approached the city, he was suddenly and finally stopped in his mad and dangerous career. He received, in a manner truly unexpected and extraordinary, the fullest conviction, that the cause he laboured to exterminate,

was the cause of God. Striking proof of the sovereignty, the riches, the resistless efficacy of saving grace! A most cruel, bloody persecutor, is immediately converted into a most zealous, successful preacher of Christianity. In this sacred cause he now embarked; and, with a spirit and ardour which nothing could extinguish, with an intrepidity and fortitude, which persecution and death, in all their horrid forms, never could move, he propagated it in the world; migrating from country to country, from city to city, night and day, in season and out of season, teaching and inculcating the religion of Jesus—passing through honour and dishonour, reputation and disreputation; slandered, abused, calumniated, scourged, imprisoned, stoned; yet accounting all those dreadful scenes as nothing for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord. Cheerfully did he suffer the loss of all his secular advantages, and worldly emoluments, and temporal honours. Important, indeed, and diversified, are the incidents of the life and ministry of this famous Apostle. What a series of extraordinary dangers, and no less extraordinary deliverances!

As Paul had appealed to Cæsar, it is probable, that he was soon after his arrival in the capital, brought before him. The indulgence he experienced in the city, where he was allowed to live in his own hired house, for two years, has been supposed to have been owing to the information which Julius, the captain of the guard, gave concerning the occurrences of the voyage; in which the Apostle had performed miraculous cures at Melita, and predicted both the loss of the ship, and the preservation of the passengers. Whither the Apostle went at the expiration of these two years, when he obtained his liberty, is not certainly known. Some have supposed, that he travelled into Spain, if not into Britain, preaching the gospel. Others have imagined it more probable, that he continued in Rome, the centre of the empire, into which there was a general concourse of people from all quarters; which rendered

it the most eligible situation for propagating Christianity, and receiving intelligence concerning the state of the churches in the various quarters of the world. This illustrious champion for the Christian cause is supposed to have sealed his testimony with his blood, and received the crown of martyrdom in the cruel persecution, which was raised by the bloody Nero, on occasion of the burning of Rome; concerning which Suetonius and Tacitus have informed us. This persecution commenced in the year of our Lord, 64. Concerning the occasion and ostensible reason of the burning of the city, historians are not fully agreed. Some suppose that Nero, that monster of men, in his wanton cruelty, set fire to the city, that he might enjoy the glory of rebuilding it, and calling it by his own name. But Suetonius, in his life of Nero, informs us, that when a certain person in conversation said, "for aught I care, when I am dead, the world may be set on fire;" the tyrant replied, "it shall be done while I am living." Immediately after he devised methods to carry his execrable purpose, so far as it related to Rome, into execution. This horrible conflagration continued for no less than six days and seven nights; consuming a great number of temples and other stately edifices, as well as the habitations of private citizens; many of whom perished in the flames. This awful scene, the bare recital of which shocks humanity, the monster beheld with pleasure, from a lofty turret; and diverting himself, as he expressed it, with the beauty of the flame, dressed in the habit which he usally wore on the stage, sung a poem, called, *The Destruction of Troy*. Having perpetrated this villany he had the audacity to charge it on the Christians; that he might exercise his cruelties upon them, under the plausible pretext of Justice.

His ingenuity the tyrant racked to invent such a variety of exquisite tortures as were most congenial to his own savage disposition. Some were wrapped in the skins of wild beasts to be devoured by dogs; others were daubed with inflammable matter, and, at the close

of the day, set on fire like torches, to give light to passengers; while Nero himself, who drove about wantonly in his chariot, increased their misery by mockery and derision. As it is probable, that this persecution raged as far as the Roman authority itself extended, the number of victims must have been immense. But that almighty Saviour, who holds in his hands the reigns of universal government, caused the very fury of the persecutor to promote the interests of Christianity.—Amidst their dreadful sufferings, he enabled the Christians so to demonstrate the invincible energy of his religion, that they even gloried in their tribulations.

To the persecuted church accessions were, day after day, made. Even in the family of the cruel Nero Paul had seals of his ministry. He, we are told, was happily instrumental in the conversion of a favourite concubine; who, afterwards, declining the emperor's company, he formed, and speedily executed, the murderous purpose of putting the apostle to death. As this eminent martyr was led to the place of execution, two of his guard, we are informed, were converted; and suffered martyrdom a few days afterwards. He finished his triumphant course at a place called the Salvian waters; and was buried on the way of Ostium. Over his grave a magnificent church was afterwards built, which remains to this day.

Nature full of Life.

THE waters teem, the dry land swarms, with sensitive existence. The subterraneous cells, the inmost recesses of the hard stone, all the productions of the orchard, the pure stream, the transparent air, are full of unseen inhabitants. Has the gracious Creator given to such minute beings, a capacity for animal gratifications? Has he, in his tender care for us, made them imperceptible to our senses? How astonishing his goodness! Were they perceptible to our senses we would abhor our sweetest drink; and in the dead of night, when all is silence, we would be stunned with noise!

THEOLOGY.

A Series of lectures on the various doctrines and duties of the christian religion, intended to explain, and to establish them against the objections of Jews, Deists, and other adversaries; forming a regular system of doctrinal and practical Divinity; interspersed with occasional historical accounts of the most material controversies in religion, and in philosophy as connected with religion, which have been agitated in earlier and later times.

LECTURE I.

II. Tim. iii. 16. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

INTENDING to elucidate, in their natural order, the various parts of revealed religion, I begin with an account of those inspired books, which are, at once, the reason and the rule of our faith and of our duty. This, manifestly, is a subject of great extent, importance and utility. In treating it I shall consider the necessity, the extent, the perfection, the inspiration, the contents, the divisions, of the sacred scriptures, and the important salutary purposes they are intended and calculated to subserve.

To pave the way for the illustration of these particulars I must suggest a few preliminary observations.

That great God, who alone could create man, and who alone can save him, in his now lapsed state, is entitled to appoint and reveal to him the way by which the important end of his creation and of his redemption may be accomplished. Not only are we, without revelation, ignorant of the only way in which we can, either glorify or enjoy God, in our now fallen state, but, Adam

himself, great as his knowledge originally was, did not, at first, fully know the extent of that obedience which he owed, on the performance of which the honour of his maker and his own happiness necessarily depended. If we suppose an interval, as, I think, we must, however short it may have been, between his creation and the proposal of the covenant of works to him, as the federal head of his numerous posterity; he must have been, at first, ignorant of one special circumstance on which both his duty and his felicity principally depended.—From the commencement of his existence he was under the moral law, which is of universal and perpetual obligation. The difference between a law and a covenant, I shall, in the sequel, have occasion to explain. Of the superadded law, relative to the fruit of a particular tree, on which his standing or falling was chiefly to turn, he must originally have been totally ignorant. Was innocent Adam, for a time, ignorant of a particular instance, on which his duty and his happiness so essentially depended? Unacquainted must his whole posterity be with that *new way*, in which alone they can, in their now fallen state, glorify and enjoy God, till he, by the gospel, reveal it to them.

Again, if we had, along with the rule which Adam, in his first state, had to direct him how he was to glorify and enjoy God; that knowledge of it, and that ability to fulfil it, which he then had; all this would be utterly insufficient to direct us in what manner we may glorify and enjoy him in our now lapsed condition. But who of all the fallen posterity of Adam can, according to the tenor and terms of the covenant of works, either glorify or enjoy God? Even on supposition, that we could do all that innocent Adam did, nay, all that he was required to do, an insuperable obstacle would still lie in the way of our entering into eternal life. We now are sinners, and for our multiplied and aggravated offences satisfaction is demanded; and satisfaction adequate, at once, to the number and magnitude of our crimes, and to the dignity of that great Being whom

we have offended. How shall this be effected? *Are thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil,* sufficient? No. But may not human victims suffice? No. Even *the fruit of the body* is declared to be utterly inadequate *to atone for the sin of the soul.* But why do I talk either of our fulfilling the precept or satisfying the penalty of the law? Of its original propension and ability to good, human nature is now unhappily despoiled. The covenant of works was calculated for the meridian of the innocent state; not at all for the fallen. If ever, therefore, we in our now sinful state, either glorify or enjoy God, it must be in the way, and according to the tenor, of another and better covenant. This leads me to observe,

That, immediately after the fall, it was revealed to man, that he was both to glorify and enjoy God, in a way, with which till then he was, and without revelation, ever must have been, unacquainted. The eternal secret was disclosed. To the astonishment and the joy of men and angels, it was discovered, that previous to the violation of the covenant of works, and the consequent ruin of the human race; nay, prior to the production of the heavens and the earth, God had transacted with a person, in all respects superior to Adam, a better covenant, by the fulfilment of which the redemption of fallen man was to be effected. Even prior to their expulsion from the paradisaical spot, was this discovery of the astonishing expedient for the recovery of our lost world, granted to our fallen parents. At so early a period was the gospel preached in our world. It was expressly revealed, that, at a future period, the *seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent.* The way of man's return to the terrestrial paradise was to be finally shut, but the way of admission into the celestial was opened. It is asked, Was the revelation granted to the first human pair, immediately after the fall, the same which we have in the sacred scriptures? The answer is obvious; the same, in substance, it, doubtless, was. For Adam, and

for his numerous posterity, there is one Saviour, and one common salvation. There are, however, two obvious respects, in which the revelation of the Saviour and of his salvation, differs in earlier and later times.

In point of extent and perspicuity. The radical revelation, which our original progenitors received, was, during the patriarchal ages, and during the Mosaic economy, in a gradual manner, amplified and enlarged. At last, by the personal ministry of our Lord, and his surviving apostles, it was completed, and the sacred canon closed. This was certified by a solemn declaration, that, as nothing is to be diminished from it, no addition is to be made to it.

This revelation was, for many ages, verbal and traditionary; transmitted by the long-lived patriarchs from generation to generation. It was, however, in due time, committed to writing. It is a received opinion, that no part of the sacred volume was written till the times of Moses. That he wrote the pentateuch, or first five sacred books, and the ninetieth psalm, we know; and it is the opinion of many, that he also wrote the book of Job. Now, according to our best chronologers, Moses was born about the year of the world 2433; and was commissioned to lead Israel out of Egypt about the year 2513. Thus did the world and the church subsist for no less than two thousand and five hundred years, before any one of the sacred books was written. The church, as well as the world, subsisted for upward of four thousand years, before any one of the books of the New Testament was written.—How many and how great are *our* privileges and advantages! I add,

That, without revelation, man, now fallen, cannot answer the purposes either of his creation, or his redemption; he cannot acceptably glorify, or truly enjoy God. One of the many stratagems, which the enemy of God and religion has long used to discredit revelation, and defeat the salutary designs of it, is a specious, but absurd pretext; that it is unnecessary. It is pretended,

that what is called the light of nature, is sufficient to direct man to everlasting felicity. But, if the light of nature be sufficient for one nation, or one man, must it not be sufficient for all? If it be sufficient for all, why is revelation granted to any? Does God any thing, in the world, or in the church, in vain? Let us appeal to facts. Concerning the situation of both the pagan world and the Christian, we have information sufficient, to enable us to form a comparative estimate. Are pagans and Christians, in fact, equally informed concerning their duty or their happiness? The extent and limits of natural religion it is exceedingly difficult to ascertain. Among the wisest pagan nations we find a mixture of the dictates of their own reason and the traditions of their ancestors; traditions as ancient as the times of Noah, from whose family all the inhabitants of the earth have sprung. That there is evil, both moral and penal, in the world, the unenlightened nations know. But ask them, either how evil entered into our world, or in what way it may be effectually expelled from the world; and you, at once, silence them. To this interesting, necessary question, unenlightened reason can furnish no answer. What silly, what cruel, what unavailing expedients have the unenlightened part of mankind used to appease the Deity, and extricate themselves from the miseries in which they have found themselves involved! Fallen man, indeed, retains some inbred notions of right and wrong. But, with regard to the true knowledge of his duty, and, the all-important concerns of the world to come, he is as stupid as he can be supposed to be, not to be altogether degraded from the rank of a rational, to that of an irrational animal. To the most stupid of animals; the ox, the ass, the wild ass, the wild ass's colt, is he compared. Job, xi. 12. To the animals, the insects is he sent for instruction. Prov. vi. 6.—11. Of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, how doubtfully do the wisest of the pagan philosophers, Socrates himself not excepted, speak? That there is a

God all nature proclaims. But of a Deity what low and unworthy, impure and base, ideas do the unenlightened nations entertain? In what a situation are the inhabitants of the far greater part of Asia, Africa, and America? In what deplorable circumstances were the inhabitants of that small, but favoured, quarter of the world, Europe, previous to the publication of the gospel among them? All who are conversant in the history of mankind anticipate every thing I can say here. We find them, in their unchristianized state, acting in a manner, which it is a disgrace to human nature to relate. In what a situation do we find the wisest, the most learned, the politest nations of the world, while unenlightened by the gospel? Not only do we find the heavenly luminaries deified by them; but almost every creature on the earth, and under it, worshipped as a god. Not only the fruits of the earth, and the most useful animals; but the ugliest and most noxious creatures; stocks and stones; nay, shameful to tell, imaginary beings have had divine honours paid to them. To such an astonishing degree have imaginary, nominal divinities been multiplied, that certain writers have reckoned up, among one people, a people celebrated all over the world for refinement and literature, the Greeks, no less a number than thirty thousand! An ancient writer informs us, that in one temple dedicated to Venus, in the city of Corinth, there were no less than a thousand priestesses, who made prostitution a part of their devotions to that unhallowed goddess. It is said, that, in another quarter of the world, on a certain occasion, no less than sixty thousand human victims were sacrificed in one temple, in the space of four days.

Such is the state of the unenlightened world. In such a state of things is there no need of revelation? Is there no need of the gospel to call and convert men from darkness to light; from the power of satan to God? What say the inspired writers on this subject? A prophet of the Old Testament assures us, that *where*

there *is no vision, the people perish.* An apostle of the New Testament, in the most express manner, affirms, that the only *name under heaven* and *among men*, in which there is *salvation* for guilty man, *is that of Jesus Christ?*—What saith the Son of God himself on this subject? He perfectly coincides with his prophets and his apostles. In his solemn address to his heavenly father, on a very memorable occasion, he speaks thus, *this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* How necessary, then, and how inestimably precious the gospel! By it we obtain the saving knowledge of the one true God, and of the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. On whom is *the Lord Jesus to be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to take vengeance?* Let an apostle say—*On them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* II. Thess. i. 7. 8. It has been said, if revelation be so necessary and valuable a blessing, why is it not granted to all mankind? Why is it bestowed only on a part, the less part, and withheld from the greater? I, in my turn, ask, Is human comprehension, which ever is imperfect, often erroneous, a proper standard to adjust the distribution of divine favours? Is man wiser than *Him* who made man? Why did he make one of his numerous creatures a grain of sand; another a glorious seraph? Is one man, who is rich, dissatisfied with his lot, because his neighbour is poor? Is the learned man discontented, because many around him are illiterate?

It is asked, if revelation be of such a salutary nature and tendency, why does it not produce, on all who receive it, effects corresponding to its genius and design? This objection originates in inattention to the important distinction between natural and moral causes. The former, by a kind of necessity, produce their proper effects. Thus water extinguishes fire; fire burns combustible matter. Causes or means of the latter kind do not by any such natural necessity or intrinsic effica-

cy produce their effects. That the gospel, in its constitution and design, is admirably calculated to accomplish the salutary purposes for which it was granted to the world, is admitted even by its most violent opposers. But that it only is a mean, to which he alone, who appointed it, can add irresistible efficacy and saving success, the scripture invariably affirms; and the testimony of scripture, the experience of every age corroborates. The divine spirit is the agent, the gospel the grand mean he employs, in the salvation of sinful man. Is it urged, if the word cannot accomplish the salvation of a soul, without the concurring energy of the spirit; why is not the spirit communicated to every man, to whom the gospel is preached? I reply, who is the man, that has asked the spirit, and has not received him? He, whose words are all more permanent than heaven or earth, has expressly said, *your heavenly father will give the holy spirit to them that ask him.*

It is queried, in fine, Can we be certain we now have in possession those, and all those books uncorrupted and unaltered, in which revelation was originally recorded? It may suffice to say, no nation on earth can be more certain of their public records, preserved, with the utmost care, in their archives, than we are of the scriptures now in our hands. The Jews preserved the law of Moses, as the law of their kingdom, in the most sacred part of the tabernacle that was erected in the wilderness, and of the temple which was afterwards built at Jerusalem. The law of Moses, the psalms, and the prophets were read, publicly, in their synagogues, every sabbath-day. With such surprising exactness and scrupulosity did their learned men inspect and guard the sacred text, lest it should, in any instance, be corrupted or altered, that they counted the very number of the letters of each book. Never was another book watched or kept with such punctuality and exactness. Never was there, never will there be, another book written, of equal necessity, importance, or utility.—Many corruptions and abuses did our Lord, in the days

of his personal ministry, correct among the Jews. But does he, do his apostles, give the smallest intimation that any of the sacred books were lost or corrupted among them? No, not the smallest hint. From our Lord's ascension to the period in which we live, the scriptures, of both the Old Testament and the New, have been universally read in all parts of the Christian world. To alter these scriptures, or any part of them, no church, popish or protestant, has ever attempted. Numerous ancient manuscripts are still extant. Numberless translations, especially of the New Testament, have been made, in both earlier and later times. Various readings in the Greek New Testament, indeed, occur. These have been, with great diligence and labour, collected. By whom, for what purpose, has the collection been made; by the enemies of revelation, to invalidate its authority? No, but by its friends to ascertain and strengthen its authority. Of all those numerous, various readings, not one has the smallest tendency to overthrow a single article of Christian faith. They relate to accents, letters and such small matters. Comparing a number of copies we are enabled fully to establish the genuine reading of the sacred text.

The inspired writings I need not enumerate. The books of the Old Testament, beginning with Genesis and ending with Malachi, are universally received as canonical, both among Jews and Christians. The books of the New Testament, beginning with Matthew and ending with the Revelation, are no less universally allowed to be canonical, by Christians of all denominations, popish and protestant.

With regard to the holy scriptures there are, especially, two extremes, into each of which, numbers have gone. Many pretend that they are altogether unnecessary. Others pretend, that not only the scriptures, which we have admitted into the sacred canon, but additional regulations, are necessary, to direct us how we may accomplish the important purposes for which we were sent into the world. In this instance,

Jews and Christians, however widely they differ in other things, agree. Professing themselves to be, in effect, wiser than God, they discover their own extreme folly. Often has satan transformed himself into an angel of light.

It is pretended by the Jews, that, in addition to the law which is contained in the five books of Moses, that illustrious prophet received from God, a variety of revelations, which he did not commit to writing; but communicated verbally to Aaron; Aaron, or his sons, to the judges; the judges to the prophets; and the prophets to one another, from generation to generation. According to this hypothesis the Jews had a twofold law to direct them in matters, both civil and religious; the one contained in the sacred books; the other oral, transmitted, from age to age, by tradition. The last, according to them, ascertained the sense of the first. The scriptural law, without the oral, they considered as imperfect, doubtful, and precarious; if not unmeaning.

Exceedingly did those traditions multiply, in the interval between the removal of the prophetic spirit from the Jewish church and the advent of the Messiah. Hence, on his arrival in our world, he found the Jews so wofully degenerated, that their religion consisted almost entirely in the observation of traditionary rites. Of these an enumeration is unnecessary. Not a few of them are nugatory and trifling; some whimsical and ludicrous; others impious and wicked. Those traditions were collected; and this collection, is, in ecclesiastical history and among theological writers, known by the name of the Talmud. This work consists of two parts, called the Mishna, and the Gemara. The former contains the text, or the traditions themselves; the latter commentaries upon them. The Mishna, which comprehends all the regulations, institutions, and laws, which, in addition to the Hebrew scriptures, the Jews reckoned themselves bound to observe, was, we are told, compiled towards the end of the second century.

It is said to have been the work of Rabbi Jehuda Hakkadosh; and to have employed him for no less than forty years. The commentaries and additions, which succeeding Rabbins made, are said to have been collected by Rabbi Jochanan Ben Eliezer, some say in the fifth, others in the sixth, and others in the seventh century. To the Mishna additions were made by the Jewish doctors in Babylon, in the sixth, or, according to certain writers, in the seventh century. Accordingly, in the Jewish history we often read of two Talmuds, distinguished by the names of the Talmud of Jerusalem, and the Talmud of Babylon. The last is said to be held in the highest estimation among the Jews.

The Romish church, in apparent imitation of the Jewish, pretends, that in addition to the scriptures of the New Testament, the apostles received from our Lord, a variety of canons relative to the polity of the Christian church, which have been handed down from apostolical times; and are to be transmitted, and, in every succeeding age of the church, observed, to the end of the world. But this is all pretence. Not to insist on the many obvious mistakes to be found in those canons and constitutions called apostolical, it may suffice to say, that, from several circumstances, it is sufficiently manifest, that they were not composed till long after the death of all the apostles. There is every reason to think, that they were not known in the world, till after the establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire, and, through the ambition of aspiring churchmen, abusing that encouragement which they had from the secular powers, that hierarchy, unknown to the apostles, was formed, which afterwards arrived at a most exorbitant pitch, and was productive of effects the most baneful to genuine Christianity. They seem to have made their appearance in the fifth, or, at soonest, in the fourth century; when, as every one who is, in the least, acquainted with the history of the ancient church, knows, manifold corruptions had crept into it.

As for the books, commonly called *apocrypha*, it is unnecessary for me to enlarge concerning them. The appellation apocrypha, is of Greek original, and literally signifies *hidden, unknown*. It has been queried, why they are called apocryphal or unknown books. To this it has been said, that the writers of these books, or, at least, some of them, are not known. But this can be no sufficient reason either for denominating them apocryphal, or excluding them from the sacred canon. There are sacred books, whose authority is not doubted, the writers of which are not certainly known. It has been said, that they are called apocryphal, because they are not publicly read. But neither is this reason satisfactory. For though, they be not publicly read among us, they are among others. They may be named apocryphal or unknown books, because they want those characters and marks of divine authority, by which the sacred scriptures are known to be the word of God, and distinguished from all spurious compositions. Accordingly, though those apocryphal books be sometimes, printed along with the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, they are not intermixed either with the the former or latter, but usually placed between the two. Many parts of them must be allowed to be useful; but inspired they are not. They appear to have been totally unknown in the first and best times of Christianity. Neither Jews nor Christians acknowledged the divinity of them till the Romish church did it. Nor did she do it, till she had, in various instances, degenerated from her ancient purity. Even the council of Trent, when it presumed to establish the authority of those books, found some parts of them so romantic and fabulous, impious and false, that it seems to have been ashamed to admit them into the sacred canon. The indications, not merely of human frailty, but human depravity, which those spurious compositions exhibit, are too numerous to be recited on this occasion, and too glaring to escape the observation even of a superficial reader.

In the historical books of the Old Testament we find mention of a variety of writings, extant in early times, which are now lost. Useful they might be; but inspired they, doubtless, were not. Had they belonged to the sacred canon, they must have been preserved. Of these we know little more than their names. Such were the *book of the wars of the Lord*, Num. xxi. 14. *The book of Jasher*, II Sam. i. 18. *The book of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, the visions of Iddo the seer*, II Chron. ix. 29. Unless the writers of those books were writers of some of the canonical books of the Old Testament, how useful soever their writings might, for a time, be, they must have been uninspired men. Heaven and earth may pass away; but an article of revelation cannot be lost.

In several passages of the New Testament there are supposed to be intimations of books in high estimation among the apostles; but which, if ever they existed, have long ago perished. For instance, in I. Cor. v. 9, the apostle bespeaks the Corinthian converts thus, *I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators.* There are, in general, two ways, in which these words have been interpreted. Either the apostolical writer refers to the preceding context, in which he speaks to the above effect; or he intends a former letter, which he had sent to the Christian converts in Corinth; but which, how excellent and useful soever it might be, was not divinely inspired, and, therefore, did not belong to the sacred canon. The apostle Jude, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of his epistle, has been understood to allude to a prophetical book written by the venerable patriarch Enoch; of whose birth, exemplary life, and miraculous translation to heaven, the inspired writer of the book of Genesis has given us a concise account. Certain eastern writers inform us, that this illustrious patriarch received from heaven many volumes of occult sciences and wonderful discoveries. But this is all romance. There is, indeed, said to be extant a book ascribed to Enoch; which, it is said, was,

for many centuries, buried in oblivion, and was discovered about two hundred years ago. To every unprejudiced person, however, it must be manifest, that this composition is of a much later date, and lower original. The writer seems, indeed, to have been a person of a fruitful invention; but whether Jew or Christian, is not certainly known. Of a book written by Enoch the apostle has said nothing. The fact, that Enoch prophesied of the last judgment, the apostle was inspired to record, for the information of the church to the end of the world. But whether he related it as a well-known tradition, or as suggested to him by immediate revelation from heaven, it is not necessary for us to know. All such apocryphal books, whatever Jews or Christians may pretend, want that indelible impression of a divine original, which is the peculiar characteristic of the canonical books.

Here it is natural to ask, How comes it to pass, that the books, called canonical, are superior to all other writings in the world? For this the text, that is prefixed to this lecture, sufficiently accounts. Two important particulars relative to the canonical scriptures are affirmed by it; their heavenly origin; and the important salutary purposes they are intended and calculated to subserve.

These books, to the exclusion of all other writings in the world, are affirmed to be *given by inspiration of God*. Of inspiration I will not attempt any logical definition, or critical discussion. Far less will I, in this place canvass the different hypotheses and questions concerning it, which have been agitated among critical writers. Suffice it to say, that our best writers consider it, as consisting of three kinds, or, at least, three degrees; which are distinguished by the names of *superintendency*, *elevation* and *suggestion*. The general nature of these several kinds or degrees of inspiration, seems to be sufficiently intimated by their different names. They manifestly indicate a gradation. Superintendency denotes the lowest, elevation a higher, and

suggestion the highest, kind or degree of inspiration. Superintendency intimates, that the sacred penmen were under the superintending influence of the Holy Ghost, only so far as was necessary to preserve them from gross errors and mistakes. The second intimates, that the sacred writers, were not only preserved from gross errors and mistakes, but were enabled to write with a degree of elevation and dignity, to which, without such supernatural assistance, they never could have attained. The third kind of inspiration, not only enabled the sacred amanuenses, to avoid errors, and write with elevation and dignity; but, in a supernatural manner, communicated to them from heaven, what they were to write. The question now is, which of these kinds or degrees of inspiration is intended in the passage that is prefixed to this discourse; in other words, with which of them were the sacred penmen, of the Old and New Testament, favoured? On this, as on almost every other subject, different opinions have been advanced. One insists, that no higher degree of inspiration was needful, or granted to the sacred writers, than that of superintendency. But, might not the Holy Bible, on this hypothesis, contain many less errors, and smaller mistakes? Another holds, that the divine spirit suggested to the sacred writers the sentiment, but left them entirely to their own choice of expression. But, according to this opinion, may not the truths contained in the sacred writings, how important soever, be exprest in terms the most improper? A third opinion, which has been adopted by many writers, both Jewish and Christian, is, that the different sacred penmen, and even the same penmen, on different occasions, were under a different kind or degree of inspiration. For example, the evangelical writers of the New Testament, when they wrote the history of our Lord's life and ministry, had no occasion for any higher kind of inspiration than superintendency; for they only related facts of which they had a previous personal knowledge; but, in writing the prophetical parts of the New Testament, and foretelling

uture events, they were under the highest kind of inspiration. A fourth opinion is, that the Holy Bible, in matter and manner, sentiment and expression, was dictated to the sacred penmen by the unerring spirit of God. One thing is certain, what Moses and the succeeding prophets delivered to the Hebrews, and have, by their writings transmitted to us, is, in places innumerable, affirmed to be the *word* of the *Lord*. And expressly does an apostle of the New Testament speak of the *words*, *which not man's wisdom teacheth; but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*. To the opinion, that the spirit of inspiration suggested to the sacred writers both sentiment and language, matter and manner, it has been objected, that in the canonical books there is a visible diversity of stile and manner. The abettors of this opinion admit the fact, but plead, that the spirit of inspiration used, as his amanuenses, men of different birth, education, and accomplishments, both natural and acquired; and the diversity of genius and capacity which he found among them, instead of superseding, he employed in his service.

The divine inspiration of the scriptures is, indeed, a fundamental article in the Christian system. Upon it the whole Christian scheme depends. How essential and necessary to our comfort is it, that we be fully established and confirmed in this fundamental truth? The most violent attacks, has it, even, in our own times, sustained. Attacked it may be; but overthrown it cannot be. The inspiration of the scriptures, even the most conscientious Christians may be tempted to doubt. Various and unknown are the stratagems and machinations, which the adversary of souls uses to overthrow the faith and interrupt the comfort of militant saints. After the attacks which he made on the head of the church, in the days of his humiliation on earth, what may not the members fear? Often and justly has it been said, it is no sin to be tempted; sin lies in yielding to the temptation. Of the numerous characters and marks of the divine original of the scriptures I shall suggest a few.

First, is there not apparent in the scriptures a divine majesty, that belongs to them *alone*, and distinguishes them from all other books in the world? Does not the great God speak, as well as act, in a manner worthy of himself, and that renders him infinitely superior to all other beings? How proper and how emphatical the question, *Hast thou an arm like God? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?* Whoever heard the man Christ Jesus speak in the word, the word accompanied by the power of the spirit, and was not constrained to say, *Never man spake like this man?*

Again, is there not a divine purity conspicuous in the scriptures? Do they not discover a purity as well as a majesty worthy of God? What a disparity between them and the most celebrated compositions of pagan antiquity? What glaring indications of human depravity do we find in the latter? Often are vices extolled for virtues! What sensuality and impurities does the alcoran of Mahomet tolerate, I ought rather to have said, encourage!

Moreover, let me remind my readers of the wonderful harmony and agreement of the several parts of the sacred volume. Were the scriptures all written at once? Were they all written by one person? No. By a variety of persons were they written; by persons in very different stations and conditions of life, from the sovereign down to the herdsman; and in very distant ages. Between the writing of the first and the last of the inspired books a period of fifteen hundred years intervened. And yet one uniform design runs through the whole from first to last. An important fact, with which the supposition of imposture is perfectly incompatible. How often do the most celebrated philosophers contradict each other? How often do they contradict themselves? What palpable inconsistencies do we find in the alcoran? The fact is so glaring, that the votaries of Mahomet themselves are constrained to admit it. For it, however, they attempt to account. But in how flimsy a manner? They plead, that, as

Mahomet was for no less than twenty years employed in writing his alcoran, during that period revolutions happened, which obliged the Deity to repeal certain laws, which he had formerly enacted, and to enjoin others in opposition to them. What! a long period of twenty years! Could not the Deity, at the commencement of twenty years, foresee every event, the most fortuitous, that would happen before the expiration of them? Disadvantageous, unjust, injurious, idea of the Deity! What was a period of twenty years in comparison of a period of one thousand and five hundred years!

Numerous inconsistences and contradictions, indeed, have the determined enemies of revealed religion pretended to find in the sacred books. But the advocates of revelation have often, to the conviction and satisfaction of the unprejudiced part of mankind, shewn, that all such contradictions and inconsistences are only pretended, or, at most, only apparent, not real. For a satisfactory solution of all these pretended contradictions I might refer my readers to our commentators and other critical writers. For a specimen, however, I shall subjoin the following instances.

The period of the perigrinations of Abraham's family, which ended in their exit from Egypt, is in Gen. xv. 13. said to continue only four hundred years; but, in Exod. xii. 40. 41. four hundred and thirty, Easily are these two accounts reconciled. It is four hundred, or four hundred and thirty, according as the commencement of it is dated from Abraham's leaving his native country, or from a later period. The account in Exodus may reckon from the time of his coming out of Ur of the Chaldees; that in Genesis, from the time, or about the time, of the birth of Isaac.

The number of persons, who, along with Jacob, went down to Egypt, is, in Gen. xlvi. 26. said to be three-score and six; in verse 27, three-score and ten; and in Acts vii. 14. three-score and fifteen. All these different accounts, however, are perfectly consistent. The first, which expressly excludes Jacob's sons' wives,

may also exclude himself, Joseph and his two sons; and then the number of his posterity amounted exactly to sixty-six. The second may include himself, Joseph, and his two sons, and then his family consisted precisely of three score and ten persons. The third account may exclude Joseph and his two sons, reducing the number to sixty-seven, but may include the eight wives, who are not included in the former accounts; and then the number is exactly three score and fifteen, as mentioned by the inspired writer of the Acts.

It is said in II. Sam. xxiv. 24. that David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for sacrifice, from Araunah or Ornan, for fifty shekels of silver; and in I. Chron. xxi. 25. it is affirmed that he paid to Ornan six hundred shekels of gold. But these accounts are not at all inconsistent. The writer of the book of Samuel intends no more than the spot, on which the altar was erected, and the oxen which were sacrificed on it; but the writer of the Chronicles comprehends the whole mountain, or tract of ground, on which the temple was afterwards built, with all its courts and avenues leading to it. On it, when David purchased it, there might be a number of houses, for which as well as for the ground, it behoved him to pay an adequate price. Fifty shekels of silver might be a no less equitable price for the former, than six hundred shekels of gold for the latter.

The inspired writers of the books of second Samuel and first Chronicles, speaking of the duration of the famine, with which David and Israel were threatened, for his vanity in numbering his subjects; the former II. Sam. xxiv. 13. calls it seven years; the latter I. Chron. xxi. 12. only three years. To remove this difficulty certain writers have supposed, that, through the inattention of transcribers, an error has crept into the text in Samuel. What, perhaps, led them to think so, is, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, commonly known by the name of the septuagint, has in the text, in Samuel, *three* instead of *seven*. But,

for a solution of the difficulty, there does not seem to be any necessity for such a supposition. The famine, had it happened, was to last only three years for the numbering of the people. But there had already been a famine of three years, on account of the injustice and cruelty of Saul in slaying the Gibeonites. II. Sam. xxi. 1. and this famine had ceased only the year immediately preceding. This fourth, probably, was the sabbatical year, in which there was neither sowing nor reaping; and, therefore, if three other years of famine had now commenced, there would have been, in all, no less than seven years of famine; agreeably to the account in second Samuel. But it was for the last three of these seven years only, the famine was to be inflicted for the sin of numbering the people; conformably to the account in first Chronicles.

Once more it is said, I. Kings viii. 9. that in the ark, which stood in the holy of holies, there was nothing beside the two tables of stone. But, Heb. ix. 4, the apostle seems to say, that besides the tables of the covenant, there were in it the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. But when the apostle speaks thus, *wherein was the golden pot;* the question is, to *what* does he by the expression *wherein* refer; whether *to the ark*, the *nearer* antecedent, or to *the holiest of all*, the remoter? That the golden pot and Aaron's rod were in the holy of holies, is certain. But even admitting that the expression *wherein* refers to the immediate antecedent, the ark of the covenant, the Greek preposition, which is translated *in*, has an ambiguity in it, and admits of a latitude of interpretation, that renders the apostle's words fully consistent with those of the Old Testament writer.

(To be Continued.)

TO THE PUBLIC.

SOLICITOUS for the diffusion of useful knowledge in this young country, I have, for some time past, employed my moments of reflection in forming the plan of a Periodical Work, the first number of which, as a specimen, I now offer to the public. My plan, doubtless, is more comprehensive, and embraces a greater variety of objects than any other of the periodical kind, that has appeared in this, or, perhaps, in any other country. Of the extent and arduousness of my undertaking, I entertain the deepest sense. But, sincerely can I say, it is my fixed determination, that, if Providence prolong my life and health, no attention, on my part, shall be wanting, to render the work, in some degree, adequate to the expectations of my friends, and useful to the public.

To all the friends of religion and science it must be a pleasing recollection, that a very great number of religious periodical publications, intermixed with occasional discussions on articles of history, criticism, and philosophy, are now in circulation, and, with an avidity almost incredible, and success surpassing expectation, read by thousands and tens of thousands, of all denominations of Christians, in Great Britain. Have the citizens of the American states done immortal honour to themselves by their successful exertions in the noble cause of civil liberty; and shall they resign the palm to their European brethren in any laudable attempt to promote the sacred cause of religion and morality? Do the inhabitants of these states increase in population and wealth, in agriculture and commerce, to a degree that attracts the attention of distant nations, and diffuses universal joy among themselves; and shall they indulge themselves in a criminal inattention to the all-important concerns of religion and the world to come? God forbid!

The periodical mode of publication, though of very late invention, has already proved to be a most useful and successful vehicle of public instruction. It is attended with many advantages alike obvious and important. By it we blend amusement with instruction; we exhibit variety and avoid prolixity. It befits the state and circumstances of millions, who have not either money to purchase, or leisure to read large volumes.

To deep erudition or extensive reading; to distinguished refinement in sentiment or composition, I do not pretend. Having had the advantage of an early academical education, read a few books, and now arrived at an advanced stage in the great journey of life, my aim is to communicate to my fellow mortals the result of my reading and researches; to

bring into their view, within a narrow compass, the origin and progress, the state and circumstances, the revolutions and changes, of the church and the world, of religion and learning, during the long period of five thousand and eight hundred years.

I must apprise my readers, that the historical and literary parts of this work are compiled, on purpose, for it. The theological part consists of discourses, which, about fifteen years ago, I delivered, in a form somewhat different, to a numerous congregation in Edinburgh, and published in that city, under the title of an *Exposition critical, doctrinal, and practical, of that celebrated compend of the Christian religion, the Assembly's Shorter Catechism.* The miscellaneous department consists partly of pieces composed for it; and partly of articles selected from other authors.

Myself, my undertaking, and its consequences, I resign into the hand of that all-wise Providence, that has the disposal of all persons and all occurrences.

M. ARTHUR.

N. B. A title page to the first volume will be printed along with the twelfth number.

THE

REPOSITORY OF KNOWLEDGE,

HISTORICAL, LITERARY, MISCELLANEOUS,

AND THEOLOGICAL.

HISTORY.

History of the origin and progress of revealed religion, the state and circumstances of the church and of the world, and the most important changes which have occurred in the former and the latter, from the commencement of time to the period in which we live.

(Continued from page 16.)

WAS the one, for reasons to be introduced in a subsequent department of our work, called the tree of life? the other has, eventually, proved to be the tree of death. To that death, which, in consequence of eating it, has entered and pervaded the world of mankind, we all are subjected. The life, which was, in a conditional manner, promised to our first father, and federal head, and to us in him; is forfeited. The death denounced, in the event of disobedience, he, and we, in him, have incurred. To death, in its fullest extent, is fallen man exposed. Wretched man!

Of the occasion, nature and design of the matrimonial institution the conclusion of the history of the primeval state informs us. The origin of this happy institution the sacred historian relates thus—*Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for*

Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.

Necessary, ancient, honourable is the matrimonial institution. To all ages earlier and later; to all nations civilized and barbarous, does it extend. How much does it enhance the enjoyments, and alleviate the cares of domestic life?

Man is a being of the social kind; not the solitary. Intended for society he has a natural propension to it, and derives a variety of the most essential advantages from it. If it was not good for innocent, much less can it be good for fallen, man to be alone. But that all gracious Being, who in doing good is incessant and unwearied, at an early period, provided a help-meet for him. The extraordinary circumstances, with which the formation of the woman was attended, we shall have occasion to explain in the sequel of this work.

Near to the man is the woman, and dear to him she ever ought to be. Ought he not ever to treat her as a part, and the better part, of himself? How near and how endearing a relation is the conjugal? With what affection and tenderness ought married persons ever to conduct toward each other!

How contrary to the original institution of marriage; and how inimical to the happiness of the matrimonial state, is the unhallowed practise of polygamy? If a plurality of wives ever could have been lawful, necessary, or proper, it must have been at the period now under review. Only one man

existed. From him all the countless millions of the human race were to descend: And yet for him one mate, and one only, was provided. Waving, for a moment, the question of lawfulness, or unlawfulness, is not polygamy, in the highest degree, impolitic and unwise? Does it contribute either to the encrease or the happiness of mankind? That the reverse is the case, the experience of many ages and countries evinces. Has not the number of males and females ever been equal, or almost equal? Is not this a plain intimation, that, as marriage commenced, it ever ought to obtain, between one man and one woman? That polygamy, though practised among the Jews as well as other eastern nations, was opposite to the original institution of marriage, and a violation of that law, which is of universal and perpetual obligation, in all times and circumstances of the world and of the church, our Lord himself, in the most express manner, taught in the days of his personal ministry on earth. It is one of the many corruptions and irregularities, which had long prevailed among the Jews, and which, by recurring to the primeval institution of marriage, he reprehends and corrects.

To review the history of marriage in its progress, in earlier and later times, and the peculiar circumstances, with which the solemnization of it has been attended among the various nations of mankind, the brevity of our plan does not permit. To the manner, in which it was celebrated among the ancient Jews, the sacred writers of both the old testament and the new, make frequent allusions. Often is it, in the inspired writings, introduced as an apposite emblem of that indissoluble, mysterious union, which subsists between our all-glorious redeemer, sustaining the endearing character of a bridegroom, and the church of the first-born in the correlative character of his honoured and happy bride. But the supposition, that the Mosaic history

introduces it in this light, or for this purpose, as allegorizing interpreters have imagined, is altogether preposterous and fantastical.

Such were the institutions of the primeval state. Such were the accommodations and advantages of the first human pair. Highly favoured pair! Happy state! But how precarious is terrestrial bliss! That happy state now is no more. Direful, indeed, was the catastrophe in which it ended; in the fatal consequences of which we all are unhappily involved.

The duration of the paradisaical state we cannot infallibly ascertain, any more than the topography of the garden of Eden, or the nature and qualities of the two famous trees which grew in it. Recollecting that the first eleven chapters of Genesis comprehend a period of no less than two thousand years, we need not be surprised, that many things are entirely omitted, others only sparingly hinted; and, when revelation is silent, let fancy forbear to sport, curiosity to pry. That our original progenitors, however, did not long enjoy their primeval dignity and felicity, is certain. Concerning the particular period at which they fell, different opinions have been entertained. From a passage in the forty-ninth psalm it has been inferred, that they sinned before the close of the day on which their formation was effected. The passage reads thus, *man being in honour abideth*, or, as the phrase in the Hebrew text literally signifies, *nighted, not*. But to every unprepossessed person, it must be manifest, that the words have no immediate relation, however they may have been accommodated, to the original state of man. They are evidently intended to express the precarious nature, and transitory duration of all sublunary enjoyments. What could suggest, to certain writers on this subject, the supposition, that man transgressed and fell on the eighth day of the world's age, it is difficult to conjecture. Nor has the opinion, that he fell on the tenth day,

though it has been adopted by a learned prelate, who, for his deep chronological researches, is, and ever will be held in the highest estimation, perhaps, any more certain foundation. The number and the magnitude of the transactions, which must have preceded the fall, seem incompatible with the supposition, that it happened on the day of man's creation. Nor is the pretended analogy between the date of the fall and the time of the anniversary fast of expiation among the Jews, which was observed on the tenth day of the month Tisri, less improbable. No less improbable is the opinion, that the primeval state continued forty days, corresponding to the number of days our Saviour fasted in the wilderness. Equally improbable is the computation, which prolongs the primeval state for thirty-three or thirty-four years; a computation which stands on no surer foundation, than the fanciful opinion of a resemblance, in duration, between the probationary state of the first Adam, and the humbled state of the second, *the Lord from heaven.*

The historical compendium, we are now reviewing, is manifestly intended only to embrace a summary of facts, without recurring to their origin, or reasoning on their causes. A discussion of the mysterious origin of moral evil, as far as a discussion of it is practicable, we refer to the theological part of our plan. Do difficulties and improbabilities appear to encumber the Mosaic history of the fall? Let us ever recollect, that conciseness necessarily occasions *apparent* obscurity; and that the wisdom, which cannot err, was alone competent to determine what was proper to be revealed to us, and what proper to be, for the present, concealed from us.

Of the seduction of our first parents by the serpent, Moses has transmitted to us an account, at once, authentic and circumstantial. This is the subject of the third chapter of Genesis. Instead

of transcribing I will recommend to my readers, the perusal and consideration of that interesting portion of sacred history, with all the attention and solemnity, which the importance and extent of the subject demand from each of us. In defiance of the divine prohibition, though most express and peremptory, the tempter, with unusual art and address, solicited our first parents to eat of the fruit of the interdicted tree; and succeeded to the utmost of his malevolent wish. How artfully does he proceed? In the temptation how visible is gradation? With the woman, and with her alone, he begins. That the divine prohibition was not so rigorous and peremptory as she supposed, he strongly insinuates. That an inconceivable encrease of knowledge would result from a participation of the forbidden fruit, he, with uncommon address and energy, urges. This fruit he, probably, represented in some very inviting point of view, by which her imagination, was, in a manner till then unknown, fascinated and enchanted. Instead of reprehending her fatal curiosity and credulity, her husband, as if bribed by her ascendancy over his affections, imitated her example, and became partner with her in guilt and consequent misery. Their newly acquired knowledge, they now found, was such, as they had abundant reason to deplore. *God doth know*, said the deceiver, *that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.* Presumptuous, delusory promise? As elohim, as gods! true; but such degraded elohim, gods, as he himself; who, at infinite expense, had acquired the experimental knowledge of the vast difference between good and evil, happiness and misery. With this part of sacred history our modern pretenders to refinement and wit have tried to make themselves and others exceedingly facetious and merry. But is it a proper subject of burlesque and raillery? Can sneer and

banter supply the want of argument and reason? Is not the subject of a nature truly serious? Are not its consequences infinitely interesting? The display of unsanctified wit on such a topic every person of candour and reflection must reprobate. That evil, moral and penal, is in the world we all know, we all feel. At what period, and in what manner it entered, are inquiries, which, to the mind of every thinking person, must often recur. Is the Mosaic account of the origin of evil in our world rejected? Is a better substituted in its place? no. To this our modern refiners do not seem to pretend. Is there in the Mosaic history any thing irrational, inconsistent, or impossible? No, but this is only one of ten thousand instances, in which things of the most serious and sacred nature have been treated with indignity. Of all the weapons, which the enemies of religion employ, low wit, petulent buffoonery, doubtless, is the most contemptible. At the story of Alexander dreaming, that a serpent spoke, Cicero, we are told, laughed. In the history under review a serpent is affirmed not only to speak, but to reason. But the sequel will shew, that, in this case, there was a seraph, though a fallen one, as well as a serpent.

Preposterous is the supposition, that the Mosaic description of the fall is an allegory. This, indeed, is a compendious method of resolving difficulties, and relieving the mind from embarrassments; but it opens a wide door for the most extravagant reveries. If the ancient philosophers affected an allegorical, mystical, mode of writing, to conceal their fanciful, wild notions from the vulgar, this can be no reason for supposing that Moses intended to involve his meaning in mysticism and obscurity.

The allegorizing humour has been carried still farther. The sense of the salutary hints, in the testament, relative to evil spirits, has been criticised and tortured in a manner, that quite enervates, if

not totally destroys it. To the Roman emperors, and their subalterns, as the rulers and governors of unenlightened and idolatrous nations, have they been applied. But does not the apostle of the gentiles make a plain distinction between flesh and blood, or men whose bodies are composed of these materials; and principalities and powers, or evil spirits, who are exiles from heaven, and work in the children of disobedience? Of the nature and powers of these invisible beings; their functions in heaven prior to their expulsion; their destination; their employments; it is safest to entertain only such sentiments as the oracles of inspiration sanction. In effecting the ruin of the human race the head of the angelical apostacy appears to have been the principal agent. His original residence in heaven, where, like other celestial intelligences, he was holy in his kind and happy in his condition; his commission of some capital crime, in his exalted sphere, which to us is not certainly known, though, it is probable, pride and ambition prompted him, in the most unprovoked manner, to rebel against his almighty sovereign; his consequent expulsion from the empyrean abodes to rove, it would seem, in the middle regions of the air; the certainty of his being, in his now degraded and outcast state, the most vile and miserable of creatures,—are, in the sacred volume, sufficiently intimated. The ruin of mankind this arch-traitor most artfully planned, and speedily executed. Could he not behold the felicity of man without envy? Did he think misery, when shared by many, more tolerable?

In relation to the serpent, which Moses introduces into his history of the fall, and to which he attributes a special concern in that tragical scene, a multiplicity of theories and conjectures have been formed, an enumeration of which, in this place, we must forbear. The opinion which possesses the

highest degree of probability, is, that, in this fatal catastrophe, satan was the principal agent, and a material serpent the instrument, by which he accomplished his cruel purpose. The sacred historian, in his concise manner, mentions only the visible instrument, not the latent agent. It seems to be his invariable plan, in this part of sacred history, to relate facts and circumstances, as they appeared, without descending to explanations. But is it not, with the most obvious allusion to the Mosaic account of the fall, that satan is, in the new testament, called the *old serpent*, and affirmed to *be a murderer from the beginning?* The opinion, which totally excludes the instrumentality of a material serpent, and that which ascribes to it the whole agency in this fatal business, are equally incompatible with the Mosaic history. That satan had no concern in the matter; that it was effected wholly by the agency of a material serpent; that this animal had originally the faculty of speech, and the power of ratiocination; that it was capable of over-reaching our first parents, though their intellectual powers were then in their meridian; that it then possessed malice sufficient to prompt, as well as ability to enable it, to accomplish their ruin,—are not these improbabilities too marvellous to be admitted? From the description of the serpent, as the *most subtle of all the beasts of the field;* from the sentence, which pronounced it *cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field*, and doomed it to crawl on its belly, and feed on dust, is it not sufficiently evident, that, on this occasion, satan usurped and employed the organs of this animal? Is it asked, why did satan, on this occasion, employ the organs of an irrational animal, rather than assume the appearance, and counterfeit the voice of a man? The reason is obvious. Had he appeared in the form, and employed the organs of a man, the imposture would evidently have been

more liable to detection. Was the serpent, then, in subtlety and address, superior to all the beasts of the field? It, doubtless, was the most proper instrument to subserve satan's malicious design.

Acquainted with its characteristics, the woman, it has been thought, was less surprised than if any animal of less art and address had attempted to converse with her. That there may have been in former times, and may now be, species of serpents, possessing qualities with which we are unacquainted; that from the present appearance of the serpent we cannot infallibly determine concerning its original form, beauty, and other accomplishments; that it was originally a most harmless as well as beautiful animal; that it moved with its body erect, or, at least, partly so, instead of crawling along horizontally; that, next to man, it possessed the greatest talents of sagacity and address,—are suppositions, which to many have appeared to possess a considerable degree of plausibility. That the serpent, into which satan now entered, was of an uncommon form, bearing some resemblance to the flying, fiery serpents, called seraphim, which are said to have abounded in some oriental countries; that to punish it, on account of the part it had acted in the ruin of mankind; to intimate the degraded condition, to which human nature, through its instrumentality, was now reduced; and to signify the doom and debasement of that malignant spirit, who, by means of it, had now accomplished the ruin of a whole species of intelligent beings, it was changed from a winged seraph into a crawling serpent,—are sentiments, which to writers, of great respectability, on this subject, have appeared highly probable. This species of serpents, it is affirmed, by the motion of their wings, reverberating the solar rays, made a most splendid and beautiful appearance. Is not the term seraph, in the plural number, seraphim, transferred, in the sacred scrip-

tures, to those bright intelligences, who have their stated residence in the upper world; but have, in earlier and later times, been occasionally sent to minister to mankind on earth? That they were conversant with our first parents, in their original state, and often, in the most friendly manner, ministred to them, cannot, for a moment, admit of a doubt. Between the angelical beings and innocent man the most endearing intercourse and friendship, doubtless, subsisted. That, during those happy interviews between the holy angels and our venerable progenitors, the former appeared in splendid external forms, is, in the highest degree, probable. That satan, by his skill in natural causes, transformed the splendour of the serpent, which he employed, into such surpassing brightness, as exactly corresponded to the external appearance of one of those celestial messengers, with whose embassy our original ancestors had been repeatedly favoured, is a sentiment, which, not only obviates certain difficulties, with which the history of the fall is otherwise encumbered, but seems to me to possess the highest degree of moral certainty. Whence the phrase of *satan transforming himself* into an angel of light, which an apostle introduces into one of his apostolical letters? Is it not manifestly borrowed from the history of the fall? Does it not sanction the hypothesis I have now advanced?

Did the woman suppose the serpent, or seraph, that now appeared to her, and conversed with her, was a celestial messenger, who visited her, as usual, with the most friendly intentions, and for the most benevolent purposes? Admitting this hypothesis, we, in a great measure, cease to wonder; though we cannot forbear to lament the credulity of our first mother. That she had, or could have, any suspicion of a fallen angel, or evil spirit, we have no reason to think. Concerning the rebellion, which

had arisen among the angelical powers, she, probably, had, as yet, received no information.

How insidious, and how formidable an adversary is the old serpent! In him the strength of the lion and the subtlety of the serpent unite. If innocent man fell, how shall sinful man stand before him?

Various, melancholy, extensive are the consequences of the fall. Not confined to the human race they extend to the earth itself, the theatre on which the fatal tragedy had been performed; and its inhabitants of every kind. How different the state of the earth prior and posterior to the entrance of sin; then blessed, now cursed! Under the baneful effects of this malediction it has long laboured. *The whole creation*, says an apostle, *groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*. In this situation it must remain till the actual arrival of that glorious period, of which the apostle John had, in vision, the joyful prospect. *I saw*, says he, *a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.* The penal effects of the fall affect, in an especial manner, the grand deceiver, and the human race, whom he, by seduction, had involved in miseries and woes, from which universal creation was insufficient to extricate them. I, saith the Lord God to the serpent, *will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it, or*, as it ought to be translated, *he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

How alarming; how big with terror, to our original parents, and their unhappy race, the awful denunciation, *in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die, dying thou shalt die!* Has not death, with all its concomitant miseries, ever since, had an universal and resistless sway? Can human strength resist; can earthly riches bribe it? no.

(To be continued.)

LITERATURE.

Demonstration of the Being and Perfections of God, from a brief survey of the Heavens and the Earth.

Sketch of Astronomy, continued from page 24.

THE first object, that presents itself here, is that bright luminary, the sun, the *great light*, which the almighty Creator of heaven and earth made *to rule the day*. This is the principal orb in our system; the centre and the soul of it. The antiphilosophical notion, that the earth is the most considerable body, and the centre of the universe, which, during a long series of ages, almost universally prevailed, has been long and justly exploded. The grand philosophical truth, that the sun is the centre of our system, which the several planetary bodies, of which it consists, circumvolve, has been established on principles, and confirmed by arguments, which leave no room for hesitation or doubt.

Of all the celestial bodies, which come within the sphere of our observation, the sun, in apparent magnitude and extensive influence, is the most eminent and conspicuous. Of the peasant, as well as the philosopher, though in a different manner, he attracts the attention. His rising in the east, and his setting in the west form, every day, two important epochas; and are among the first objects of which we take notice. When this great ruler of the day makes his appearance in the eastern horizon, all the nocturnal luminaries disappear. From

his superior splendor and presence, they all shrink and evanish. At his early call universal nature awakes, and, illuminated by his beams, displays all her variegated beauties. How beautiful, stately, majestic his diurnal circuit! In what poetical language does an inspired writer describe it! *Coming out of his chamber the sun rejoiceth, as a strong man, to run his race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.* Does not this great luminary honour to his creator? was not the formation of such an immense globe a work worthy of a God? An astronomer an atheist! It is impossible.

The question, of what materials this vast orb is composed, has, for a long series of ages, excited the attention of the curious part of mankind, and occasioned a variety of speculations, a recital of which does not come within the limits of our plan. The opinion almost universally adopted, and confirmed by all the phenomena of nature, with which we are acquainted, is, that the sun is an immense globe of fire, placed in the centre of the system, or, as our astronomers speak, in the lowest focus of all the planetary and cometary bodies, of which it consists.

How astonishing the magnitude of this great luminary of the day! His apparent diameter, according to the computation of our best astronomers, amounts to upwards of eight hundred thousand, and his ambit to more than twenty-five hundred thousand, English miles. The great Sir Isaac Newton computes the sun to be nine hundred thousand times larger than the earth. His distance from us is, by our modern astronomers, estimated at ninety-five millions of miles. Flying, in his orbit, at the rate of four thousand, two hundred and sixty-two miles, every hour, he turns round on his axis, in the space of twenty-five days and six hours. And by the

various attractions of the circumvolving planets and comets, he seems to be agitated, by a small motion, round the central point of gravity in the system.

To the temperature of the earth and of its various inhabitants, the magnitude and distance of this luminary, and the corresponding degrees of light and heat which they derive from it, are wisely adapted. Were the sun larger, he would set the earth on fire; were he smaller, he would leave it frozen. Were he nearer to us, we should be scorched to death; were he farther from us, we should not be able to live for want of heat. He does not annoy; he only refreshes us. This is only one of ten thousand instances of the admirable nicety and exactness, with which the several parts of the system are constituted, and all their dimensions, motions, and uses adjusted. How uninvestigable the wisdom that formed; and how unlimited the power that executed the plan of the universe!

Are we startled at the reports of astronomy concerning the sun, that enormous mass of fire, which the omnipotent kindled, and, for thousands of years, has kept alive? let us, to borrow the words of the elegant and pious Hervey, "attend our philosophical guides, and we shall be brought acquainted with speculations more enlarged, and more amazing. This sun, with all its attendant planets, is but a very little part of the grand machine of the universe. Every star is the centre of a magnificent system; having a retinue of worlds irradiated by its beams, and revolving round its attractive influence; all which are lost, to our sight, in the unmeasurable wilds of ether." How manifold and how glorious are thy works, Lord God almighty! in impenetrable wisdom, and infinite power hast thou made them all; heaven and earth are full of thy goodness!

The apparent stationary attitude of the sun in the days of Joshua, and his seeming retrograde motion in the times of Hezekiah, are among the

most extraordinary phenomena that occur in his history. For these, however, I am not, in this place, to account; intending to introduce, in a subsequent number, a dissertation on the two passages of sacred history, in which they occur. Another singular phenomenon of the sun, is, the preternatural eclipse, which it underwent at the all-important period of our saviour's crucifixion. A short dissertation on this extraordinary circumstance I inserted in the former number of this Magazine.

The macular appearances, or spots, on the sun's disk, discovered, by Galileo, as early as 1610, have excited much curiosity, and occasioned no small diversity of conjectures. But, though our astronomers have long observed, and often attempted to explain them, all their united efforts have hitherto proved unsatisfactory. That they are occasioned by the smoke of volcanoes breaking out, time after time, on the surface of the sun; that they are exhalations raised by its intense heat, or a kind of clouds flying in its atmosphere; that they are new worlds in a chaotic, unformed state, as our earth once was; that they are planets moving in orbits nearer to the sun than any with which we are acquainted; are all, at best, only arbitrary opinions, fanciful conjectures, supported by no satisfactory evidence. Are there not numerous inexplicable mysteries in nature, as well as in revealed religion? How just, as well as pious, Job's reflection; *Lo, these are part of his ways* and works; *but how small a portion of him* or of them *is*, I may add, can be *known!*

Besides his rotation on his own axis, the sun has a twofold apparent motion; a diurnal and an annual. The former he accomplishes in twenty-four hours; the latter in a little more than three hundred and sixty-five days. The former determines the length of our day; the latter of our year. His diurnal and his annual motion; I call *apparent*, not real. That the earth and other planets revolve about the

sun, and not the sun about them, I shall, in describing the earth, have occasion to shew. How beneficial and salutary are the effects of this revolution, diurnal and annual! To the former we are indebted for the alternate succession of day and night, the seasons of labour and of repose; to the latter for the regular returns of spring and autumn, summer and winter. Were the planets stationary, the one half of them would be dazzled with everlasting day, the other involved in eternal night; the former only would be habitable; the latter utterly uninhabitable. Not confined to us the light and warmth of the sun; his vivifying and nutrimental influences, extend to creation around us; to minerals, and vegetables, as well as animals. Does not the Jewish lawgiver, in his valedictory benediction to the Hebrew tribes, speak of *the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon?* The fructifying effect which these heavenly luminaries have on the earth, not only the sage, but the savage perceives. Did our almighty creator intend this world for our temporary abode? at what unbounded expense, with what an unutterable profusion of goodness, has he fitted it for our accommodation and comfort? Can we, day after day, behold the light and feel the exhilerating influences of the sun, and forget his and our maker? Inexcusable, criminal, shameful ingratitude! Does the sun proclaim his being and perfections? and shall we remain silent?

> The unweary'd sun, from day to day,
> Does his Creator's power display;
> And publishes to every land,
> The works of an almighty hand.

The reasons of the different degrees of heat, which the earth receives from the sun, in summer and in winter, are sufficiently obvious. His continuance above the horizon is, in summer, longer;

in winter, shorter. The former encreases the heat in proportion as it lengthens the day; the latter diminishes the heat and augments the cold, in proportion as it shortens the day. Another reason is, the different direction of the sun's rays in summer and in winter; the former more vertical, the latter more oblique. The vertical rays strike with greater, the oblique with less force. Of the former a greater number fall within the area of any place; of the latter a less number.

Astonishing is that contrivance of infinite wisdom, by which a proper distance between the sun, as the centre, and our earth and all the other planets, of which the system consists, is invariably preserved. Within the orbits, or paths, wherein they travel through the wide dimensions of open and unresisting space, which were originally assigned to them, they ever are confined. To depart too far from their centre, or to approach too near to it, could not fail to prove fatal to their inhabitants. The former, the attractive power of the sun prevents; the latter, that projectile force, which the almighty impressed upon the planetary bodies at their creation, prevents. Between these attractive and projectile powers the adjustment is so exact, that, without any solid orbits to confine them, the several planets have invariably continued in their respective paths from the creation to this day.

Concerning the sun mankind have entertained the most extravagant and opposite ideas. By one part of the human race this luminary has been advanced to the rank of a god, and had divine honours paid to it; by another it has been debased as low as hell, and supposed to be the place of infernal misery. But far is this from being the only instance, in which *men have become vain in their imaginations; and, professing themselves to be wise, have become fools.*

(To be continued.)

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

The completion of Prophecy, exemplified in the destruction of Jerusalem, a striking proof of the truth of Revelation.

IT has been observed, that prophecies are permanent miracles, whose authority is sufficiently confirmed by their completion, and are, therefore, solid proofs of the supernatural origin of the religion, whose truth they are intended to testify. Of all the various proofs, by which the truth of revelation has been evinced, that which arises from the exact fulfilment of prophecy, is, perhaps, the most obvious. Numerous are the instances, in which this observation might be exemplified. Events the most improbable, which no human sagacity could forsee or foretel, have been, in the most circumstantial manner, foretold; and the predictions literally fulfilled. The signal exemplification of this truth, to which I shall, at present, confine myself, occurs in the history of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem; which terminated in the total and final dispersion of the Jewish nation.

At an early period was this dreadful catastrophe foretold. Upwards of fifteen hundred years before it happened Moses, in the most striking manner, predicted it. Between his prophetical description in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and the historical relation of Flavius Josephus, who was an eye-witness of it, there is such a surprising agreement, in all the material circumstances, that no man, friend of christianity or foe, can candidly compare the one with the other, without astonishment. To this early intimation from Moses, the

predictions of the subsequent prophets agree. To transcribe all these predictions the brevity of our plan forbids. A specimen may suffice. *The Lord*, says the Hebrew lawgiver, *shall bring a nation against thee from far, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand. The people of the prince that shall come*, says Daniel, *shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.* Could any degree of human sagacity or political wisdom foresee, at so early a period, the tragical scene, which these prophets, in such an explicit manner, foretel? Must they not have been inspired by that omniscient spirit to whom all events, past, present, and to come, are equally known? In a manner still more full and circumstantial does our Lord, in the days of his personal ministry, predict the speedy approach of this unparalleled catastrophe. The fearful prodigies and signs, which were to precede it; the unexampled and unequalled sufferings, which the unhappy Jews were to undergo; the dreadful concomitants and consequences of the total destruction of the city; and the short time in which all these things were to be accomplished, he foretels, in a manner that has the appearance of a history of a past, rather than a prophecy of a future event. Thus he speaks, *there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. The days shall come upon thee, O Jerusalem! when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and shall not leave thee one stone upon another. And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights; and great signs shall there be from heaven. There shall be great tribulation, such as never happened from the beginning of the world, to this time. They shall fall by the edge of the sword,*

and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down, of the gentiles. This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled. Tremendous predictions! But the event was not less tremendous than the prediction. A complication of calamities this, which never has been, and, probably, never will be equalled in the history of mankind. Could human wisdom foresee these extraordinary occurrences? Was there in the days of our Lord's humiliation, any probability of such an event? not the smallest. Universal peace prevailed.

Numerous preternatural and alarming signs preceded this tremendous catastrophe. In the days of Claudius Cesar, a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem, there happened, in Judea, a prodigious tempest, most vehement winds and rain, terrible lightning and thunder; accompanied with fearful tremblings and roarings of the earth. Previous to the invasion of Judea, a star, in the form of a sword, hung over the city a whole year. In the dead of the night, at the time of the feast of tabernacles, a light similar to that of the meridian sun, shone, for half an hour, on the temple and places adjacent. The great eastern gate of the temple, which was of solid brass, and of such bulk and weight, that twenty men were scarcely sufficient to shut it, though it was fastened with strong bolts, suddenly opened of its own accord. The priests watching in the temple, at the feast of pentecost, heard a voice, as of a great multitude, crying, *let us go hence.* Even before the sun went down, there appeared armies in battle array, and encountering in the air; with weapons glittering, and chariots which seemed to compass the whole country, and invest the great cities; especially Jerusalem. For no less than seven years and a half, a countryman, named Jesus, ran up and down the streets of Jerusalem, especially at the solemn festivals, cry-

ing, in the most doleful accents, *wo to Jerusalem! wo to the city! wo to the temple! wo to the people!* And, though cruelly punished, nothing could restrain him from crying; till at last, as he was uttering these words, *wo to myself also*, he was instantly struck dead by a stone from a sling. Were those extraordinary appearances insignificant or unmeaning? Far from it. They were, as our Lord had foretold, only the beginning of sorrow; omens and forerunners of calamities and miseries unexampled in the annals of the world.

The Roman army, under Vespasian, having entered Judea from the north-east, desolated city and country. In the seventieth year of the christian æra, on the Lord's day, this great army first encamped before Jerusalem. On the first arrival of it, the christians, crediting the predictions and following the directions of their divine master, fled from Jerusalem, and hid themselves in the mountainous parts of the country. But the Jews, judicially and awfully infatuated, instead of submitting to Vespasian, who is said to have been a merciful general, madly resisted; nay, bent on their own destruction, they, in many instances, encountered and massacred one another. At Jerusalem, especially, was the scene tragical and bloody beyond description. Its inhabitants, as an additional proof of their infatuation, were divided into factions and parties. These, though they occasionally united to make furious, but unsuccessful attacks on the Romans, often murdered one another. Nay, shocking to relate, they even massacred one another in sport; pretending to try the sharpness of their swords. The multitude of unburied bodies, corrupting the air, produced a fearful pestilence. Along with sword and pestilence, famine prevailed to such a degree, that they fed on one another. Ladies, otherwise delicate, broiled their sucking infants and ate them.

The first breach, it has been observed, was made, in the lower city, on the Lord's day. On that day the temple was burnt; on that day also, the upper city, otherwise called the citadel, was taken and burnt

After an obstinate defence, for six months, the city was taken, and immense numbers of its inhabitants put to the sword. A Roman commander, that the words of our Lord might be literally fulfilled, ordered the foundations of the temple to be ploughed up. To such a degree was Titus, notwithstanding his usual clemency, provoked by the obstinacy of the Jews, that he is said to have crucified them before the walls of the city as long as he had wood for erecting crosses. The destruction of Jerusalem happened at the time of one of the three annual Jewish festivals; when, it is computed, there might be almost three millions of souls in the city. No less than eleven hundred thousand are said to have perished in it, by sword, famine and pestilence. Between two and three hundred thousand were cut off in other places. Almost one hundred thousand were taken prisoners, and sent into Egypt and Syria, to be sold for slaves, exposed for shows, or devoured by wild beasts. Almost incredible are the cruelties and massacres, which that devoted people suffered in succeeding times. In a dreadful war, about sixty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, occasioned by an impostor pretending to be the Messiah, six hundred thousand Jews are said to have been slain; besides what perished by famine and pestilence. The very rivers, it is said, overflowed with human blood, and the sea, into which they ran, was, for some miles, marked with it.

Such were the unparalleled calamities and miseries, which our Lord foresaw and foretold to befal the unhappy Jews; and which, in exact conformity to his prediction, different historians have recorded.

Is not the coincidence, in every material circumstance, between his predictions of this unexpected and improbable event, and the historical account, which Josephus a Jew, and also Tacitus and Suetonius Romans, all avowed enemies to christianity, have given of it—truly striking? Could the three evangelical histories, which contain the predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem, be compiled and published after the event was accomplished? It is impossible. The evangelical writers, who record these predictions, far from compiling and publishing their histories after the destruction of Jerusalem, appear to have died before that event happened. Is it not truly remarkable, that the three of the four evangelists, who foretold this dreadful calamity, died before it was accomplished; and the fourth, the only one who survived, predicted nothing concerning it?

Is it not also very remarkable, that the first encampment of the Roman army before Jerusalem; the first breach in the lower city; the burning of the temple; and the taking and burning of the citadel, should all happen on the Lord's day? Was this recurrence of the Lord's day, on four such memorable occasions, the effect of accident or chance? no. It was, replies an ingenious writer, among the times and seasons determined by omniscience from the foundation of the world. Does it not carry in it a strong intimation, that, though this dreadful calamity befel the Jews, on account of a long series of complicated and aggravated crimes, that which, in an especial manner, procured and hastened it, was a recent enormous deed, the crucifixion of the Lord of glory; to perpetuate the memory of whose triumphant resurrection, this day was instituted, and will continue to be observed in the christian church, to the end of the world? Our Lord, prior to his death had said, *this generation shall not pass*

till all these things be fulfilled. In this, as well as all other respects, the prophecy was literally accomplished. The destruction of both city and temple of Jerusalem, the total overthrow of the nation and the church of the Jews, happened in less than forty years after the prophecy was delivered. Many of that generation, therefore, must have been eye-witnesses of its awful completion, and sharers in the horrors and miseries which accompanied it.

The proof of the inspiration of the scriptures and truth of revelation, arising from the exact fulfilment of prophecy, I shall continue occasionally in the subsequent numbers.

ON PARABOLICAL COMPOSITIONS.

PUBLIC instructors have employed two ways of communicating knowledge to mankind; the plain, or direct; and the figurative, or allegorical. Our blessed Lord, accommodating himself to his subject, and to the taste of the people, among whom he lived and conversed, sometimes used the one; sometimes the other. The plain, or direct method is most adapted to statutes and public laws. But, when the ignorant are to be instructed, and the heart is to be gained, the figurative is employed with the greatest propriety and success. In the earlier ages of the world, when the art of reasoning was not so much known or practised, men were instructed chiefly by signs and hieroglyphics; and, before their minds were conversant in matters of subtlety and speculation, all instruction abounded with parable and fable, simile and comparison. The oldest parables or apologues are to be found in the sacred scriptures, which afford, indeed, not only the most ancient, but the most excellent mo-

dels in every kind of composition. From the eastern nations, particularly the Syrians, Jews, and Arabians, among whom the figurative style was much in use, it passed into Greece, where it was long in high reputation; and by that channel into Rome. The fables of Æsop and Phædrus have, all along, been justly admired.

The word *parable*, is often used in scripture, in a general sense, and applied to short sayings or aphorisms, full of sentiment, and expressed in a figurative and proverbial manner. There are two original words, which are both rendered *parable* by our translators; the first always so; the latter sometimes *proverb*. But short and lively sentences, in which a comparison is included, are not parables in the same sense with the larger and longer narratives of the figurative kind, to which that appellation more properly belongs. The aim of both, however, being the same, the translators commonly use the word *parable*.

A parable may be founded on a true or a probable story, or on one wholly fictitious. The most ancient recorded in scripture are of the latter kind; but the parables of our blessed Saviour of the former. Some distinguish the figurative kind of composition into three different species; *parable*, *allegory*, and *apologue*. A parable, though it be a mere fiction, must yet be such a fiction as is probable, or, at least, as may possibly be true. An allegory is a discourse, by which a different sense is conveyed from what is directly expressed by the words. The peculiar province of an apologue or fable is to relate things and events impossible in their nature, such as the conversation of trees, and the discourses of irrational animals, which may, nevertheless, convey excellent moral instruction. But such distinctions and disquisitions are, perhaps, too nice and refined.

The *advantages* of the figurative method of communicating moral and religious instruction are too obvious to need illustration. When comparisons are taken from objects well known and familiar to the mind, moral and divine things come to be more easily comprehended, and the impression made on the mind is both stronger, and more permanent. Moral instruction, in general, is not so likely to gain an easy entrance into the mind, when delivered in a formal and didactic manner, but needs all the ornament of composition, all the art of parable and fable to recommend it. Not only the fables of Æsop and Phædrus, already mentioned, but the writings of Homer and Virgil, the tablature of Cebes, the vision of Mirzah, and all the most elegant pictures of life and manners, in ancient and modern times, may be comprised under the general denomination of fable or parable, either of a more limited, or of a more extensive kind. A proper selection of fables for the instruction of youth is, however, indispensably necessary. Why does Plato banish Homer from his republic? Because his fables concerning the gods and a future state were not calculated to inspire young people with just and worthy sentiments.

Does parable seize us by surprise, without giving the alarm to our prejudices and passions? This method of instruction is more easily remembered, and calculated to make a deeper impression upon the mind than any other. But with the parables of our blessed Saviour the most celebrated apologues of antiquity are not to be compared. The parables of the gospel are distinguished by a dignity of sentiment; an elegant simplicity; a sublimity of thought; an energy of expression; and, above all, by the infinite importance of the instructions, which they are intended to convey. The amusement of the imagination is an inferior object. The grand objects are the illumination of the mind, and the

purification of the heart. The whole system of Heathen mythology was the invention of the poets; a mere farrago of childish and romantic stories, chiefly intended to amuse the vulgar. As the far greater part of their fables and allegories are founded on this fictitious history of the gods, so they were plainly subservient to the support of that system of idolatry and polytheism, which the gospel was designed to overthrow. Indeed it seems doubtful whether any secret meaning was conveyed under these allegorical representations. But their tendency was evidently hurtful rather than beneficial. Our Lord's parables describe the awful scenes of eternity, and the interesting consequences of a future judgment in a language, though simple and unadorned, yet amazingly striking and impressive. Let any man of true taste and judgment compare the abstruse allegories of Plato, or the monstrous fables of the Jewish Talmuds, with the parables of our blessed Saviour, he will be at no loss, which to prefer. Tired and disgusted with the one, he will be struck with admiration at the beauty, elegance, and propriety of the other.

But, in order rightly to understand our Lord's parables, it is necessary to guard against those abuses, to which this figurative manner of composition has given occasion. These abuses have proceeded from a wantonness of imagination, which affects to graft its own extravagant conceits on every subject whatever. The whole of scripture has been turned into allegory. The very miracles of the gospel, though recorded in all the simplicity of historic truth, have met with the same treatment from both the friends and the enemies of religion, to the great discredit of its evidence, and perversion of its design. An acquaintance with history, particularly the history of the Jewish people, to which many of the parables have a particular reference; an acquaintance with ancient customs and

manners, to which they frequently allude; an acquaintance with the best writers and critics; and, above all, a dependance upon *the Father of lights* for the illumination of his holy spirit, are necessary.

THE SEPARATE EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL.

THE opinion, that the soul, when the body dies, ceases to exist, or, at least, to exercise its powers of action and enjoyment, though, for obvious reasons, adopted by many of our modern illuminists, will, upon examination, be found to be, at once, irrational, and antiscriptural. The philosopher, no less than the divine, the infidel no less than the christian, must grant, that, as the denial of the intermediate state, or, the separate existence of the soul, during the interval between death and the resurrection, has a tendency, in some measure, to destroy the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, it ought not to be admitted, but after the most careful examination, and on the most convincing evidence. But whence, in this case, is evidence to be derived? Does reason furnish it? no. Does revelation afford it? no; it expressly refuses it. Whence originated the notion, that the annihilation of the soul accompanies, necessarily accompanies, the dissolution of the body? Is not the one immaterial; the other material? Are mind and matter homogeneous? Are they not, rather, specifically different? Cannot the soul exist and act independent of the body? Ask reason, and it will tell you. How often do we find the most astonishing powers of mind, the clearest discernment, the soundest judgment, the most luxuriant imagination, the most retentive memory, inhabiting a weak, sickly, decayed, dying body? The body is

feeble; the soul vigorous and strong. How often, at the approach of death, when the soul seems to struggle for freedom from its confinement, do we find its conceptions inconceivably grand, just, and even surpassing its former powers? Nor is it altogether unworthy of notice, that during the slumbers and dreams of the night, when the soul acts, in some degree, independent of the body, we often find astonishing exertions and efforts of the mental powers; of which it would be easy to produce instances. Is death an eternal sleep, then whence that dread of death, with which every infidel, the most determined, is, at its approach, in a greater or less degree, seized? What! believe death to be an everlasting sleep; and yet, at its approach, filled with terror! what a contradiction! The fact, evidently, is, a man may live, but he cannot die, an infidel.

Concerning the essential difference between the soul and the body, the mortal nature of the one, and the immortal nature of the other, the scriptures, of both the old testament and the new, are most explicit. The immortality of the soul and the future resurrection of the body are articles of both the Jewish and christian creeds. *The dust shall return to the earth, as it was*, says the royal preacher, *but the spirit*, or soul, *shall return unto God, who gave it.* How plain a discrimination between the two constituent parts of our complex nature; and the different fate of the one and the other? Did not Moses and Elias die many hundreds of years before our Lord appeared in human nature! Did their souls die with their bodies? no. Their bodies, indeed, died; but their souls survived. Accordingly we find them among the members of that august assembly with which our Lord was attended at his transfiguration on the holy mount. Far from a state of inconsciousness *they spake of the* all-important *decease, which he was about to accom-*

plish at Jerusalem. Is it the intention of the parable of Dives and Lazarus to represent the different state of good and bad men, posterior to the general resurrection? no. Such a supposition the parable itself forbids. It was in the state prior to death, not that posterior to it, in which the rich man wished his surviving brethren to be, by the mission and ministry of Lazarus, roused and reformed. *This night*, says our Lord to the penitent thief on the cross, *shalt thou be with me in paradise.* This night! Can the phrase, this night, intend the state posterior to the general resurrection? no. The words are sufficiently unambiguous and plain. Far from dying with the body the penitent's soul was that very night, along with the soul of his and our Lord, to be admitted to both the exercises and enjoyments of the celestial state. Sudden, happy change! *I*, says the eminent and exemplary apostle of the Gentiles, *have a desire to depart and to be with Christ.* Was his soul to be entombed with his body? no. His soul, on its departure from his body, was immediately to be with Christ. Of a middle state, a state of insensibility and inactivity, he speaks not a word. Such a state is, in scripture, unknown. *I saw*, says the apostle John, *under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus, which they held.* Were their souls slain along with their bodies? no. Their bodies had been slain, but their souls survived. But why do I multiply proofs? the immortality of the soul is, in the scriptures, written in such indelible and legible characters; that he who runneth may read.

The objections of those who deny or dispute the existence of the soul, during the intermediate state, we shall consider in a subsequent number.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ANCIENT CITY OF BABYLON.

THE name *Babel*, from which Babylon seems to come, signifies confusion. It is the name of that famous tower, which the united art and strength of the human race attempted to build after the flood. But, in a manner the most unexpected, the design was rendered abortive, and a final stop put to the work. God, in a manner for which many writers have attempted to account, but which still remains inexplicable, confounded their language. Of this great undertaking Nimrod is supposed to have been the chief promoter; though, sacred history informs us, all mankind, then in being, were engaged in it. Their design, it is conjectured, was to secure themselves from the fatal effects of a new deluge. Eastern tradition says, they were three years employed in preparing bricks for this great tower; each of which was thirteen cubits long, and five thick; and twenty-two years in building it. That it was built of brick and bitumen, instead of stone and mortar, the mosaic history informs us. This bitumen was a fat unctuous sort of earth, or slimy kind of substance, found in the neighbourhood of Babylon. The height of this extraordinary tower certain writers have estimated at a furlong; others at a mile; and others at four miles; a height equal, if not superior, to the altitude of the highest mountain in the known world. But this is all conjecture and fable.

The tower of Belus, of which the Greek historian, Herodotus, who flourished upwards of four hundred years before the birth of our Saviour, speaks, is supposed to have been the same with the tower, called, in scripture, Babel, or, at least, built

on the old foundation; and was to be seen in his time. It consisted of eight towers, raised one upon another, but gradually decreasing in size from the first to the last. Above the eighth stood the famous temple of Belus, the ascent to which was carried, in a circular manner, round the outside of the building. The riches of this temple, in statues, censers, tables, cups, and other vessels of massy gold, were immense. This great tower and temple are said to have been built by direction of Belus, king of Babylon. There were two Babylonian monarchs of this name; Belus the father of Ninus, and Belus the son of Semiramis. The former is said to have been co-temporary with Shamgar, one of the judges of the Jews, who flourished in the latter part of the twenty-seventh century of the world. The situation and ruins of this ancient structure, modern travellers pretend to have found. But, in their account of its situation, and description of its ruins, they do not agree; and it is extremely problematical whether any of them have discovered the true situation or ruins of the original tower of Babel. Babylon being the capital of Nimrod's empire, the antiquity of it cannot be questioned. For the honour of founding this truly magnificent city three illustrious personages appear as candidates; Nimrod; Belus, the Assyrian, father of Ninus; and Semiramis. The matter has been compromised thus—Nimrod began, Belus enlarged it; and Semiramis, not only enlarged, but adorned it to such a degree, that she has been called the foundress of it. But, above all, Nebuchadnezzar put the finishing hand to it, and made it one of the wonders of the world. *Is not this*, says he in the pride and vanity of his heart, *great Babylon, which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty.*

The following description of this magnificent city is collected chiefly from Herodotus, who had been on the spot, and is the most ancient as well as most reputable historian, that has transmitted any account of it to us.

Babylon stood in a spacious plain, and was, by the river Euphrates, divided into two great parts. The walls were, in every respect, prodigious; being eighty-seven feet thick, three hundred and fifty feet high, and four hundred and eighty furlongs in compass. They were drawn round the city in form of an exact square, surrounded on the outside with a vast ditch, full of water, and lined with bricks on both sides. In every side of this great square were twenty-five gates, an hundred in all, made of solid brass. Between every two gates were three towers; with four more at the four corners, three between each of these corners and the next gate on each side. Each tower was ten feet higher than the wall. From the twenty-five gates in each side of this great square, went twenty-five streets in straight lines to the gates which were directly over against them, in the opposite side. The whole number of streets amounted to fifty, each fifteen miles long; all crossing each other at right angles. There were also four half streets, which had houses only on one side, and the wall on the other. These went round the four sides of the city next the walls, and were each of them two hundred feet broad; the other streets being a hundred and fifty feet in breadth. Thus the whole city was divided into six hundred and seventy-six squares; each of which measured four furlongs and a half on every side. Around all these squares, on the side next to the streets, stood the houses; the space in the middle of each square being occupied in gardens and for other uses. A branch of the river Euphrates ran across the city, from the

north to the south side; and divided it into two great parts On each side of the river was a key, and a high wall of the same thickness with the walls of the city. In this wall, opposite to the streets, which led to the river, were gates of brass, and from them a descent by steps to the river. The bridge, which opened the communication between the two great parts of the city, was, in magnificence, equal to the other buildings. Before they began to build it, they turned, by canals, the course of the river; and laid its channel quite dry. This gave them an opportunity to lay the foundation of it in the best manner, and to raise artificial banks, to prevent those inundations, to which, during the overflowings of the river, the country was otherwise exposed. The river thus turned out of its usual course, was received into a prodigious artificial lake, dug for the purpose, westward of the city. This lake, according to Herodotus, was fifty-two; and according to Megasthenes, seventy-five miles square; and thirty-five feet deep. Into this vast lake the river was made to flow till all the work was finished; and then it was turned back into its former channel. To prevent the Euphrates, during its encrease, from entering by the gates, and overflowing the city, this lake as well as the canal was preserved. In it, as a great reservoir, the water was kept all the year for the benefit of the inhabitants, to be let out by sluices, as exigencies might require. At the two ends of the bridge stood two palaces, which had a communication with each other, by a vault built under the channel of the river, The old palace, which stood on the east side of the river, was thirty furlongs in circumference; and the new palace, which stood on the opposite side, was sixty furlongs in compass. It was surrounded with three walls, one within another, with considerable spaces between them. These walls, as also those of the other palace, were em-

bellished with an infinite variety of sculptures, representing all kinds of animals to the life. Here were the hanging gardens, which have been so much and so justly celebrated in history. These were of a square form, every side of which was four hundred feet long. They were carried up into the air, in the manner of several large terraces, one above another, till they equalled the height of the walls of the city. The ascent was from terrace to terrace by stairs ten feet wide. The whole pile was sustained by vast arches, raised upon other arches, one above another, and strengthened by a wall surrounding it twenty-two feet thick. On the top of these arches were laid large flat stones, sixteen feet long and four feet broad. These were lined with bricks closely cemented together with plaster; and that covered with sheets of lead, upon which lay the mould of the gardens. Such were the works which render Babylon famous in history; a great part of which historians have attributed to that enterprising woman, Semiramis.

From the Assyrians this noble city passed into the hands of the Persians; from the Persians to the Macedonians. Here Alexander the great, died. How unstable and transitory is all terrestrial grandeur! Soon after the death of Alexander the great this city began to decline. Seleucus Nicanor built a new city forty miles above it; and, to perpetuate his name, called it Seleucia; to people which he drew five hundred thousand persons out of Babylon. In the time of Curtius, the historian, Babylon was diminished one fourth part; in the time of Pliny it was reduced to desolation; and when Jerom lived it was turned into a park, in which the kings of Persia hunted. According to some modern travellers it now consits of only one tower, called the tower of Daniel; from which may be seen the ruins of this once splendid city.

A gentleman, who passed through the place in the year 1574, gives the following account of it. " The village of Elugo is situated where Babylon of Chaldea formerly stood. The harbour, where people go ashore in order to travel by land to the city of Bagdad, is a quarter of a league from it. The soil is so dry and barren, that they cannot till it, and so naked, that I never could have believed, that this powerful city, once the most stately and renowned in all the world, and situated in the fruitful country of Shinar, could have stood there; had I not seen, by the situation of the place, by many antiquities of great beauty which are to be seen round about, and especially by the old bridge over the Euphrates, whereof some piles and arches of incredible strength are still remaining, that it certainly stood there. The front of the village Elugo occupies the eminence on which the castle stood, and the ruins of its fortifications are still visible. Behind, and some little way beyond, is the tower of Babylon, which is half a league in diameter; but so ruinous, so low, and so full of venemous creatures, that lodge in the holes, which they have made in the rubbish, that no one durst approach nearer to it than within half a league, except during two months in the winter, when those animals never stir out of their holes." How unsubstantial, fleeting, and momentary are all the objects of human ambition; and all the monuments of human ingenuity and art! Truly *the fashion of this world passeth away.* How certain, infallibly certain the completion of scripture-prediction! Compare the traveller's account of the now ruinous state of Babylon, with the prophetical description of it which a prophet delivered ages before it happened. *Babylon the glory of kingdoms*, says Isaiah, *the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; it shall not*

be inhabited, neither shall the Arabian pitch his tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses; and dragons in their pleasant palaces.

STRICTURES ON THE HISTORY OF THE MANNA IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE history of the Manna, and the law relative to the gathering and use of it, Moses has given us in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus. This extraordinary food first appeared, around the Hebrew camp in the wilderness, in the year 2513, and continued, without interruption, to descend daily, Sabbath-days excepted, till the year 2553. Concerning the etymology of its name critical writers are not agreed. The occasion of it, however, is obvious from the history of its first descent. *When the children of Israel*, says Moses, *saw it, they said one to another, man-hu*, which, in our translation, is, *it is manna, for they wist not what it was. Man*, which is said to be an Egyptian word, is supposed to be put for the Hebrew word *mah; man-hu*, for *mah-hu*. Our translation, which, in most instances, is just and correct; is, in this passage, most unhappy. The passage, read indicatively, as in our translation certainly contradicts itself. *They said, it is manna; for they knew not what it was.* If they knew not, how could they tell, what it was? It, doubtless, ought to be translat-

ed, as in the septuagint, and other writings, interrogatively, and then the passage reads thus,—*They said, what is this? for they knew not what it was.* This interpretation admitted, the apparent contradiction vanishes. The history is perfectly consistent with itself, as well as with facts. If they knew not, it was most natural for them to ask, what it was.

Of this new bread each Israelite was, every lawful day, to gather an omer, that is, about three quarts, English measure. Every Friday there fell, and each Israelite was to gather, a double quantity. The same manna, when left in the field, was melted by the heat of the sun; and, when brought to the house, was of such a consistence as to require beating in a mortar, and endure the heat of the fire. Every Israelite, it is said, notwithstanding their great number and correspondent diversity of taste, found the manna as agreeable as if it had been prepared and intended for him alone. The inspired writer of the seventy-eight psalm calls it *the corn of heaven and angels' food.* It was prepared in the lower heaven, or atmosphere; instead of springing immediately from the earth. To enumerate the various interpretations of the phrase, *angels' food,* I have neither leisure nor inclination. Suffice it to say, it was food of an excellent origin and nature; and, in preparing it for the thousands of Israel in that inhospitable wilderness, which they now traversed, providence, it is probable, employed the ministry of angels.

The chief question relative to this extraordinary food, which has been agitated among critical writers, is, whether, by it the scripture intends, and we are to understand, any new substance, till then totally unknown in the world; formed, in a miraculous manner, for the sustenance of Israel in that barren desert. On this, as on almost all other questions, authors have advanced different opi-

nions. By those, who take the negative side, it is observed, that a kind of manna has been known to fall in all ages, earlier and later; and still falls, as in Arabia, Poland, Calabria, and other countries. This is said to be a sort of condensed honey, that is to be found, in summer, on trees, herbs, rocks, and even the sands of Arabia Petræa. It is said to be of such an evaporable nature, that if thirty pounds of it are kept in an open vessel for fifteen days, not more than ten will be found remaining. Of a number of learned writers it is the opinion, that the manna, by which the Hebrews were, for long forty years, sustained in the wilderness, was the same, in substance, with that which is still found in Arabia, and sold in the shops of the apothecaries in grand Cairo. It has also been conjectured, that it was of the same nature with that wild honey, on which John Baptist lived in the wilderness. On this principle it has been supposed, that the Mosaic history of the manna does not intend the formation of a species of food new, and, till then, unknown in the world; but that the miracle consisted in the uniform manner, and the vast quantity, in which providence provided and dispensed the manna to the Hebrew tribes for no less than forty years in a desert, in which, without a miraculous interposition, they must inevitably have perished. On the contrary, the Hebrews, and other orientals, believe, that the manna was a thing till then unknown in the world, and provided for Israel in a manner wholly miraculous. Suffice it for me to say, there are several important respects, in which it cannot be denied, but must be allowed, to have been miraculous.

It continued, for no less than forty years to fall, in the most regular and uniform manner, on six days of the week, never on the seventh, the Sabbath. It fell in such a prodigious quantity as was sufficient for the sustenance of almost three mil-

lions of persons. Does the history of any age or country furnish another such instance? A double quantity uniformly fell on the sixth day of the week, never on any other day. That which was gathered on any of the first five days of the week, if kept the succeeding day, stunk and bred worms; but that which was gathered on the sixth, was as sweet on the seventh day, the Sabbath, as if it had fallen and been gathered on that day. It continued to fall, without interruption or diminution, during all the forty years of the peregrinations of Israel in the wilderness; but as soon as they came out of that desert and had an opportunity of eating the bread of Canaan, it totally and finally ceased. Were not these things preternatural and miraculous? Will any man undertake to account for them on natural principles? Is there any known law of nature, the ordinary operation of which could produce them?

This manna an apostle calls *spiritual meat.* It was a figure of that superior bread, which the Teacher, sent from God, calls the *bread of life.* To himself, this heavenly teacher expressly applies it. *I am*, says he to the Jews, *the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead; but I am the living bread, that came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.*

ANECDOTE OF AN ARCHBISHOP AND AN ACTOR.

THE archbishop of Canterbury happening to be, in the year 1675, in company with Mr. Betterton, a celebrated player of that period, said, " pray

inform me, Mr. Betterton, what is the reason, you actors, on the stage, can affect your audience, when you only speak, of things *imaginary;* while we, in the pulpit, speak of things *real*, which our congregations only receive as if they were *imaginary?* "Why, my lord," says Butterton, "the reason is very obvious. We actors, on the stage, speak of things *imaginary*, as if they were *real;* but you, in the pulpit, speak of things *real*, as if they were *imaginary*." Serious useful hint to the ministers of religion! exceedingly profitable may it be to them.

A POEM ON PROVIDENCE, WRITTEN BY A YOUNG FEMALE SLAVE.

OF this surprising young African, her master, in a letter to the publisher of her poetical compositions, gives the following account.—

The following is a copy of a letter sent by the author's master to the publisher.

Phillis was brought from Africa to America, in the year 1761, between seven and eight years of age. Without any assistance from school education, and by only what she was taught in the family, she, in sixteen months time from her arrival, attained the English language, to which she was an utter stranger before, to such a degree, as to read any, the most difficult parts of the sacred writings, to the great astonishment of all who heard her.

As to her writing, her own curiosity led her to it; and this she learnt in so short a time, that in the year 1765, she wrote a letter to the Rev. Mr. Occom, the Indian minister, while in England.

She has a great inclination to learn the Latin tongue, and has made some progress in it. This relation is given by her master who bought her, and with whom she now lives.

JOHN WHEATLY,

Boston. Nov. 14, 1772,

The genuineness of this, and her other poems on various subjects, religious and moral, is attested by a number of gentlemen of the first respectability in Boston.

THOUGHTS ON THE WORKS OF PROVIDENCE.

ARISE, my soul, on wings enraptur'd, rise
To praise the monarch of the earth and skies,
Whose goodness and benificence appear
As round its centre moves the rolling year,
Or when the morning glows with rosy charms,
Or the sun slumbers in the ocean's arms:
Of light divine be a rich portion lent
To guide my soul, and favour my intent.
Celestial muse, my arduous flight sustain,
And raise my mind to a seraphic strain!
  Ador'd for ever be the God unseen,
Which round the sun revolves this vast machine,
Though to his eye its mass a point appears:
Ador'd the God that whirls surrounding spheres,
Which first ordain'd that mighty Sol should reign
The peerless monarch of th' ethereal train:
Of miles twice forty millions is his height,
And yet his radiance dazzles mortal sight
So far beneath—from him th' extended earth
Vigour derives, and ev'ry flow'ry birth:

Vast through her orb she moves with easy grace
Around her Phœbus in unbounded space;
True to her course th' impetuous storm derides,
Triumphant o'er the winds, and surging tides.
Almighty, in these wond'rous works of thine,
What pow'r, what wisdom, and what goodness shine!
And are thy wonders, Lord, by men explor'd,
And yet creating glory unador'd!
Creation smiles in various beauty gay,
While day to night, and night succeeds to day:
That wisdom, which attends Jehovah's ways,
Shines most conspicuous in the solar rays:
Without them, destitute of heat and light,
This world would be the reign of endless night:
In their excess how would our race complain,
Abhorring life! how hate its lengthen'd chain!
From air adust what num'rous ills would rise?
What dire contagion taint the burning skies?
What pestilential vapours, fraught with death,
Would rise, and overspread the lands beneath?
Hail, smiling morn, that from the orient main
Ascending dost adorn the heavenly plain!
So rich, so various are thy beauteous dies,
That spread through all the circuit of the skies,
That, full of thee, my soul in rapture soars,
And thy great God, the cause of all adores.
O'er beings infinite his love extends,
His wisdom rules them, and his pow'r defends.
When tasks diurnal tire the human frame,
The spirits faint, and dim the vital flame,
Then too that ever active bounty shines,
Which not infinity of space confines.
The sable veil, that night in silence draws,
Conceals effects, but shows the Almighty cause;
Night seals in sleep the wide creation fair,
And all is peaceful but the brow of care.
Again, gay Phœbus, as the day before,
Wakes ev'ry eye, but what shall wake no more;

Again the face of nature is renew'd,
Which still appears harmonious, fair, and good.
May grateful strains salute the smiling morn,
Before its beams the eastern hills adorn!
  Shall day to day, and night to night conspire
To show the goodness of the Almighty sire?
This mental voice shall man regardless hear,
And never, never raise the filial pray'r?
To-day, O harken! nor your folly mourn
For time mispent, that never will return.
  But see the sons of vegetation rise,
And spread their leafy banners to the skies.
All-wise, Almighty providence we trace
In trees, and plants, and all the flow'ry race;
As clear as in the nobler frame of man,
All lovely copies of the Maker's plan.
The pow'r the same that forms a ray of light,
That call'd creation from eternal night.
" Let there be light," he said: from his profound
Old Chaos heard, and trembled at the sound:
Swift as the word, inspir'd by pow'r divine,
Behold the light around its Maker shine,
The first fair product of th' omnific God
And now through all his works diffus'd abroad.
  As reason's pow'rs by day our God disclose,
So we may trace him in the night's repose:
Say what is sleep? and dreams how passing strange?
When action ceases and ideas range
Licentious and unbounded o'er the plains,
Where Fancy's queen in giddy triumphs reigns.
Hear in soft strains the dreaming lover sigh
To a kind fair, or rave in jealousy;
On pleasure now, and now on vengeance bent,
The lab'ring passions struggle for a vent.
What pow'r, O man! thy reason then restores,
So long suspended in nocturnal hours?
What secret hand returns the mental train,
And gives improv'd thine active pow'rs again?

From thee, O man, what gratitude should rise!
And when from balmy sleep thou op'st thine eyes,
Let thy first thoughts be praises to the skies.
How merciful our God who thus imparts
O'erflowing tides of joy to human hearts,
When wants and woes might be our righteous lot,
Our God forgetting, by our God forgot!
Among the mental pow'rs a question rose,
" What most the image of th' eternal shows?"
When thus to reason (so let Fancy rove)
Her great companion spoke, immortal love.
" Say, mighty pow'r, how long shall strife prevail,
" And with its murmurs load the whisp'ring gale?
" Refer the cause to recollection's shrine,
" Who loud proclaims my origin divine,
" The cause whence heav'n and earth began to be,
" And is not man immortaliz'd by me?
" Reason, let this most causeless strife subside."
Thus love pronounc'd, and reason thus reply'd.
" Thy birth, celestial queen! 'tis mine to own,
" In thee resplendent is the Godhead shown;
" Thy words persuade, my soul enraptur'd feels,
" Resistless beauty which thy smile reveals."
Ardent she spoke, and, kindling at her charms,
She clasp'd the blooming goddess in her arms.
Infinite love where'er we turn our eyes
Appears: this ev'ry creature's wants supplies;
This most is heard in nature's constant voice,
This makes the morn, and this the eve rejoice;
This bids the fost'ring rains and dews descend
To nourish all, to serve one gen'ral end,
The good of man: yet man ungrateful pays
But little homage, and but little praise.
To him, whose works array'd with mercy shine,
What songs should rise, how constant, how divine!

THE SURPRISING FIDELITY OF A DOG; AND WONDERFUL PRESERVATION OF HIS OWNERS.

MANY instances of the care of Providence are so striking, that they cannot escape the observation of the most inattentive and thoughtless. A devout observation of them is attended with equal profit and pleasure. The following instance merits both attention and remembrance.

Speaking of the vegetables of Norway, Doctor Smollett says, " Among the other kinds of grass here found, is what Botanists call *viola canina*, with short broad leaves; a plant which contributed, in a very surprising manner, to the preservation of two Norway youths in the year 1652. These brothers, on the first day of August, made an excursion from their father's house of about twenty English miles, to enjoy the diversions of shooting and fishing, in the mountains that separate Guldbrandsdale from the province of Valders. After, having staid four days in the lake of Rif, they rowed in a skiff to a very small island of this lake about sixteen paces in length. Here while they remained the skiff broke loose, in consequence of a sudden squall, and was driven to the other shore, where their dog stood waiting for his masters. As neither of the youths could swim, they saw themselves thus abandoned to famine, on a desolate island, sequestered from all intercourse with mankind. Their first care was to build a kind of hut of small stones, that they might, in some degree, be screened from the inclemency of the weather.

Towards the close of the second day, their appetite being whetted to the keenest sense of hunger, they industriously sought some vegetable food, and ventured to eat the *viola canina*, each to the amount of an ounce twice a day; and this was all they could find at one search. Their stomachs were eased, their spirits refreshed, and the acute pains which had begun to seize their arms and shoulders, immediately abated. Eleven days did they subsist on this vegetable; but it failed on the twelfth, and they were reduced to the brink of despair, when they accidentally found a little spot overgrown with sorrel, which they consumed at one meal; nevertheless it was produced in less than four and twenty hours; and the devout young men, with tears of gratitude, and due acknowledgments to heaven, owned it as an interposition of providence in their behalf. During the first days of their suffering, they had called and beckoned to their dog, and used every possible allurement to induce that animal to swim over, that they might kill him for their subsistance; but he would not obey their signals. They were now reduced to such a weak condition, that they could not stand, and hardly made shift to creep from their hut in quest of the sorrel. The elder was seized with a violent palpitation of the heart, which throbbed so loud as to be heard at some distance, and he appeared to be in extremity. The younger, with his knife, engraved upon a piece of timber a short account of their unhappy fate, and pointed out a text in the Psalms, on which he requested that their funeral sermon might be preached. Then they joined in fervent prayer, and, embracing one another, resigned themselves to death without murmuring. The dog had tarried eight days with their baggage on the shore, and then returned to their father's house, where he refused food; but howled and moaned incessantly. From the grief of this faithful animal,

the parents concluded that their children had met with some misfortune, and dispatched a man in search of them to the mountain. He arrived on the eleventh day at the lake, where he found their cloaths, and, concluding they were drowned, returned with these melancholy tidings. On the thirteenth day of their famine, the youths, having by this time given up all hopes of relief, heard the sound of horses travelling up the mountains. They forthwith raised their voices, and, being heard, the travellers hastened to their assistance. The skiff being happily found on the shore undamaged, the humane strangers put off to the little island, where they found the brothers almost exhausted. When food was offered to the elder brother, his stomach could hardly bear the smallest portion; and after he was conveyed to his father's house, he continued some days in a very dangerous disorder; of which, however, he recovered, and survived this disaster seven and thirty years. The other son retrieved his strength and health; and, in the year 1691, drew up this narration, as a pious acknowledgment of God's providence."

AN AWFUL WARNING TO A LATE ENGLISH NOBLEMAN; SUCCEEDED BY HIS SUDDEN DISSOLUTION.

In relation to multitudes of vulgar stories concerning apparitions and spectres, ghosts and hobgoblins, originating in ignorance and superstition, I avow myself a confirmed infidel. But there are occasional unusual phenomena and occurrences, which, if they do not fully convince, cannot fail to

confound the most determined sceptic. The following instance seems to be authenticated by all the evidence which a case of this kind admits. It was published sixteen years ago, in a small volume, intitled, *the Spiritual Register*, by a clergyman of respectability in London. He informs us, that he had his information from another minister, who had it from one of the gentlemen, who were eye-witnesses of the melancholy scene. This information, he tells us, was afterwards confirmed to him by a near relation of the deceased nobleman.

A late lord L——n was equally distinguished by his splendid talents and dissolute morals. After abandoning himself to every species of wickedness and vice, he was, in a manner as uncommon and striking, as his death was sudden and alarming, apprised of his approaching dissolution. As he lay in bed one night, he was, as he himself described it, awaked out of his sleep, by a noise not unlike the fluttering of a bird about the curtains of his bed. On opening his eyes he saw the appearance of a woman, who has been supposed to have died of grief, on account of one or more of her daughters, whom he had seduced and ruined. At the appearance he was dreadfully shocked, and, in great agitation, cried out, what do you want? I am come, she replied, to warn you of your dissolution. What! answered he in great surprise, shall I not live two months? to which she rejoined, no, you will die within *three days*. Next day he was observed to be greatly agitated and distressed in his mind; and, it is said, mentioned the extraordinary circumstance to a number of his friends in the House of Lords. At length Saturday, which was the third day, came. At breakfast he appeared very pensive and disturbed; but affected to outbrave it. To those who were in company with him, and observed the perturbation of his mind, ex-

pressed by the features of his countenance, he said, why do you look so grave? Are you thinking of the ghost? I am well, very well, as ever I was in my life. To divert, if possible, the unwelcome thoughts that haunted his mind, he invited company to dinner; and, in the evening he said to his party, a few hours more, and *I shall jockey the ghost.* At eleven o'clock, he retired from the company. After a little time he began to undress for bed. His servant, in the mean time, was preparing a rhubarb-draught, but, having nothing to mix it, he went out of the room for a spoon. By the time he returned, his lordship was getting into bed; but before his servant could give him the medicine, he reclined his head on the pillow, fell into strong convulsions, and instantly expired. The cries of the servant alarmed the company, who flew to his assistance, but, behold! all was over. It was almost twelve o'clock, and lord L——n was a dead man. Thus the tragical event exactly corresponded to the awful warning.

All, who heard it, were filled with astonishment; and, in spite of the infidelity of the age, every mouth was stopped. Awful confirmation of our Lord's prediction, *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead!*

Description of the ANACONDA, *a monstrous serpent, in a letter from a gentleman in the East Indies.*

Astonishing in variety, in magnitude, and in number, are the works of the almighty Creator. Of animals, terrestrial and aqueous, how surprising

the diversity and other properties! For a specimen I here present my readers with the following description of a serpent of a particular species.

" Some years since the commands of my directors carrying me to Ceylon, to transact an affair of no little consequence, I had an apartment prepared for me on the skirts of the principal town, facing the woods; at some distance from my window there was a rising ground, on which stood three or four large palm trees, that afforded me every morning, as I lay in bed, a delightful prospect. One morning, as I was looking at these, I saw, as I thought, a large arm of one of them in strange commotions, bending and twisting about, (but there was no wind) and often striking one end to the earth, then raising it again, and losing it among the leaves. I was gazing at this with great amazement, when a Ceylonese coming in, I begged him to look and wonder with me; he looked, Sir, and was more amazed and terrified than I; in short, a paleness overspread his whole face, and he seemed almost sinking to the earth with terror: he conjured me to bar up all my doors, and then told me that what appeared an arm of the tree to me, was in reality a serpent of that monstrous size, diverting itself there with its various contortions, and now and then darting down to the earth for prey. I soon found out the truth of what he told me, and looking more earnestly, saw it seize a small animal before me, and take it up into the tree. Enquiring further about this strange sight, the Ceylonese told me that the wonder was, only that the creature was so near us, for it was a serpent, but too well known in the island, but that it usually kept in the inland parts and woods, where it often dropt down from the covert of a large tree, and devoured a traveller alive. A relation so strange as this could never have gained credit with me, but that I plainly saw before my eyes a creature, from its size, capa-

ble of doing more than was related. The monster, Sir, continued to divert himself, till we assembled a body of twelve of us, to go on horseback, well armed, to destroy him. We rode up towards the place in a body, but not to expose ourselves to unnecessary dangers, we surrounded the ground, and rode behind a close thicket, from whence we might, unseen, level our fire-arms at him. It was by this time the heat of the day; and when we arrived there, we found him so much larger than we had conceived, that we all wished ourselves safe at home again, and it was a long time before any body dared to fire a gun. We had now time to observe the creature, and believe me, Sir, all the descriptions of monsters of this kind, hitherto given, are trifles, to the truth of what we saw in him. The Ceylonese all agreed he was much larger than any they had ever seen, and such a mixture of horror and beauty mixed together, no eye but that which saw it can conceive. The creature, Sir, was more than as thick as a slender man's waist, yet seemed far from fat, and very long in proportion to its thickness, often hanging himself by his tail from the highest boughs of the tree; he was most surprisingly agile and nimble, and was now diverting himself, in the heat of the day, with a thousand gambols round the branches of the tree, and sometimes would come down and twist his tail round the bottom of the trunk, throwing himself, to his whole length, all around it: in the midst of one of these gambols, we were surprised to see him get up in haste into a tree, but the cause soon appeared; a small animal of the fox kind, but not like our English foxes, coming immediately after, the serpent had seen him coming, and took this way to be prepared for him: he darted down upon the unwary creature from the tree and sucked him in a few minutes, then licked his chops with a broad double tongue, of a blackish colour, and laid him-

self, at his ease, at length upon the ground, but with his tail still twisted round the tree. In this posture I had leisure, with horror, yet with admiration, to behold him; he was covered all over with scales like those of a crocodile, all ridged up in the middle; his head was green, with a vast black spot in the middle, and yellow streaks round the jaws; he had a yellow circle, like a golden collar, round his neck, and behind that another great spot of black; his sides were of a dusky olive colour, and his back more beautiful than can be well imagined; there ran down the middle of it a broad chain of black, curled and waved at the edge; round this, there ran all the way a narrow one of flesh colour, and on the outside of that, a very broad one of a bright yellow, not strait like a ribband, but waved and curled in various inflections, and spotted all over at small distances, with great round and long blotches of a perfect blood colour; his head was very flat, but extremely broad, and his eyes monstrously large, and very bright and terrible. These, Sir, were his colours as he lay still; but when he moved about in the sun, he was a thousand times more beautiful. The colours, according to the several shades of light, presented the eye with a vast variety of colours, and in many places looked like our changeable colours in silks,

We now all aimed our pieces at him as he lay, and fired at his head, all at the same instant; but whether he accidentally moved just at that time, or our fears made us take bad sight, or whatever else might be the cause, we either missed him, or never hurt him: in short, Sir, he took no notice of it; and, after a council of war, we all agreed to make no further attempt upon him at that time, but to go home, and return with a stronger party the next day.

(To be continued.)

THEOLOGY.

LECTURE I.

(Continued from page 64.)

THAT it signifies, and might be read, *near*, as well as *in*, cannot be denied. And, therefore, to which ever of the antecedents the apostle, by the expression *wherein* refers, the nearer or the remoter, his words are not at all inconsistent with those of the first book of Kings, In proof of the inspiration and divinity of the scriptures, let me remind my readers of the following important consideration.

The sacred writers, in a variety of striking instances, predict the most distant and contingent events; and predict them with as much punctuality and exactness, as if they had lived when they happened, and been on the spot to see them accomplished. I speak of *contingent* events, the accomplishment of which does not depend on second causes; and, therefore, cannot be calculated and accounted for by the laws of nature. Events there are, which the knowledge of the laws of nature may enable naturalists, not only to describe, but to foretel ages before they happen. The transit of a planet—an eclipse of the sun, occasioned by the interposition of the moon between it and our earth—or, an eclipse of the moon by the intervention of our atmosphere between the sun and it—the alternate ebbing and flowing of the sea—and similar events, can be calculated and predicted for ages to come. The reason is obvious. They depend on what we

call the laws of nature; which are permanent and regular in their operations. But occurrences of the most casual and fortuitous kind, dependent on no such causes, and of which, from such established laws, no man can have any previous knowledge, did the inspired writers foretel, hundreds, many hundreds of years, before they happened.

The time, place, and persons concerned in events to come to pass in futurity, did the prophets of God specify with the utmost precision, and most circumstantial nicety. Let me exemplify this important observation in a few instances.

About three hundred years before Josiah, king of Judah, was born, was it foretold, that he, by name, should burn, upon an altar in Bethel, the bones of the idolatrous priests whom Jeroboam had employed to offer sacrifices upon it. This event is predicted with as much clearness and perspecuity as if the prophet had been writing the history of it. Compare 1 Kings xiii. 2. with 2 Kings xxiii. 15, —18.

Could a witness of the fatal end of Ahab and Jezebel have described it, in all its circumstances, such as dogs licking the blood of the former, and eating the flesh of the latter, in a more particular manner, than it was predicted a considerable time before it happened? With 1 Kings xxi. 17,—24. compare 2 Kings ix. 30,—37.

Not only did Isaiah, in his prophecy foretel, the return of the Jews from captivity, two hundred years before, but expressly named the very monarch, who, in the hand of Providence, was to be the instrument of it. Isa. xlv. 1.

In how circumstantial a manner did Daniel predict the rise and downfal of four great monarchies; the Chaldean; the Persian; the Grecian; and the Roman! Chap. vii.

How minutely did the prophetic writers of the Old Testament speak of the most important of all

events; the actual incarnation of the Son of God, and the salutary consequences of it; the time of it, at the expiration of the seventy prophetic weeks, or 490 years; the place, and several extraordinary circumstances attending it!

How particularly do the inspired writers of the New Testament foretel the most momentous events to be accomplished in the church and the world from the ascension of our lord till his second coming! In how lively colours is the character of the Antichristian power delineated in the apocalyptic visions!

Must not the books which contain such predictions be divinely inspired? Must not such predictions proceed from that omniscient spirit, to whom past and coming events are equally known? Must they not come from that Supreme Being, who has the sovereign disposal of all events; the most casual as well as the most necessary? I shall only add,

In fine, The signal interposition and care of Providence for the preservation of those sacred books; and the transmission of them uncorrupted to the latest times. Many books, once useful and esteemed, both among Jews and Christains, have gone into perpetual oblivion. But the holy scriptures are preserved, and, though to many insipid, to the saints savoury and precious. Let us call to mind the great antiquity of the sacred books. In this, as well as in all other respects, they possess an ascendancy over all other books. The books of Moses, in all probability, are the first that ever were written. The famous Jewish historian, indeed, informs us, that the posterity of Seth, many ages prior to the birth of Moses, wrote their discoveries in the different sciences on two pillars, one of stone, another of brick; the former for their preservation in case of a flood; the latter in case of a conflagration. But this is a fabulous story.

Previous to the discovery of the useful art of printing, books must have been comparatively scarce, On different occasions have the sacred books been in apparent danger of becoming wholly extinct. Such was the degeneracy of the Jewish church, previous to the accession of good king Josiah to the throne, that the sacred books, then written, seemed to be totally lost. But to his joy he soon found, that, through the interposition of an ever-watchful Providence, a copy of them had been preserved. This is thought to have been the original copy written by the hands of the inspired penmen themselves. 2 Kings xxii. 8.

It has been imagined that all the sacred books, written before the Babylonian captivity, were then lost; and restored by Ezra. But this opinion has no foundation, and is, in the highest degree, improbable. Do we not find Daniel, during the captivity, consulting the prophecies of Jeremiah, relative to the duration of it? Dan. ix. 2.

In the darkest times of the New Testament, when ignorance and superstition almost universally prevailed, we find manuscript copies of the scriptures in almost every quarter; and translations of them into different languages. Thus, though other books have perished, the loss of which we cannot but lament, this blessed book, the Bible, never has, it never can be lost. All past inundations and conflagrations, erections and subversions of great empires, and cities, it has survived. The care of Providence has been, in a signal manner, exercised about it. As an invaluable depositum has it been committed to the church, and continued in her from generation to generation. Unadultered has it come down from our forefathers to us. Indeed among the variety of manuscripts, no small diversity occurs. This may have been owing, in a great part, to the inattention of transcribers. But, it has

been observed, as an illustrious proof of the special care of Providence about this heavenly book, that none of these differences affect any one article of the faith or the comfort of Christians.

I cannot dismiss this particular, without recommending to the serious attention of my readers, an observation of the venerable assembly of divines at Westminster, in their larger catechism. It is this—" The spirit of God bearing witness by and with the scriptures in the heart of man, is alone able fully to persuade it that they are the very word of God." How comes it to pass that there is so much scepticism among us? The reason is obvious. The religion of many is wholly of the speculative kind. To vital and experimental religion they remain utter strangers. The great matter is to feel, on our hearts, supernatural power co-operating with the word. Happy are the preachers who can congratulate their hearers as the Apostle did his—*Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, even in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.*

The first division of the scriptures is into the Old and New Testament. The scriptures of the Old Testament, the inspired writer to the Ephesians denominates the *Prophets;* and the scriptures of the New, the *Apostles*. Eph. ii. 20. The writers, by a well known figure of speech, are here put for their writings. The Jewish church was built upon the foundation of the Prophets; the Christian church on the doctrine of both Prophets and Apostles.

The ancient Jews are said to have divided the Old Testament into three parts. The first comprehended the five books of Moses, which they reckoned of higher authority than any of the writings of the later prophets; the second, a number of the prophetical books, to which they ascribed a secondary sort of inspiration; and the third, the

books to which they atributed only that kind of inspiration, which has already been distinguished by the name of superintendency. The Pentateuch, they are said to have subdivided into fifty-four sections, corresponding to the number of Sabbaths in what is called their intercalated year. In other years, they are said to have conjoined two short sections on two different Sabbaths, in order that the whole law might be read in the space of the year. Our Saviour, speaking of the Old Testament in the days of his humiliation, seems to refer to two divisions of it. On one occasion, he divides it into two great parts, *Moses* and the *Prophets*. Luke xvi. 31. By Moses, we are evidently to understand the first five sacred books; and by the Prophets, all the other books written by inspired men, previous to the incarnation of Christ. In another place, he distributes the scriptures of the Old Testament into three parts; *the law of Moses*, *the Prophets*, and *the Psalms*. Luke xxiv. 44. He is generally understood to allude here to the division of the sacred books then in use among the Jews. They are, indeed, said to have divided them into twenty-two books, answering to the twenty-two letters of their alphabet. But the principal division of their inspired writings was into three parts. The first contained the five books of Moses; the second the Prophets; and the third the Psalms; or, as they are usually styled, *Hagiographa;* which is a Greek word, literally signifying, the holy writings. These comprehend four books; the Psalms, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

The sacred books of both Testaments, in respect of their contents, might be distributed into historical and prophetical, doctrinal and practical. As the church had subsisted in the world for between two and three thousand years before any one of these books was written, the first, as was most necessary and fit, is historical; giving us a brief detail of the

most interesting events which had happened in the world and the church prior to the writing of it. It informs us of the creation of the world, the fall of man, the first revelation of a Saviour, the consequent formation of a church on earth, and the transmission of the knowledge of the true God from generation to generation, during the long period of two thousand and four hundred years. As the church was foreseen to subsist for many ages posterior to the writing of the last of the inspired books, it, as was most requisite and proper, is prophetical; foretelling the most important and interesting events that are accomplished in the church and the world, from the commencement to the expiration of the long interval between the writing of it, and the final restitution of all things. The duration of the world, and of the church in it, may be divided into three great periods; the first prior to the writing of all the sacred books; the third posterior to it. The scriptures written in the middle period look both backward to the ages which preceded, and forward to the times to come. There is, therefore, an obvious propriety in their beginning with history, and ending with prophecy. As the redemption of the church was unaccomplished during the Old Testament, a great part of the inspired books, which were written then, is prophetical. The glorious topic on which both the earlier and later Prophets dwell, is the coming of the Son of God, the Saviour of our world, and the salutary consequences of it; particularly to the Gentile nations.

The scriptures of the NewTestament obviously distribute themselves into three parts; a historical, an epistolary, and a prophetical. The historical part includes the first five books. The first four of which contain a compendious history of our Lord's life and ministry. The book of the Acts relates the travels and successful ministrations of his Apostles and others, whom he employed in propagating

his religion in various quarters of the world, in which till then it had been unknown. The epistolary part comprises all the following books of the New Testament, the Revelation excepted. The epistles are distributed into two classes, *particular* and *general.* By the former are meant apostolical letters, sent either to particular churches or individual persons. By the epistles denominated *catholic*, *universal*, or *general*, are intended such as were immediately written either to the diffused body of believers in all parts of the world, or at least the great body of Christians sojourning in a particular country or countries. The prophetical part is comprehended in the last of all the sacred books. Here is an astonishing series of prophecy, in the investigation and study of which the most learned and godly in the several ages of the New Testament have been employed; and in relation to several parts of which they have entertained very different sentiments. It foretels the most interesting events which have been accomplished, especially in that part of the world called Christian, for almost sixteen hundred years past; and also which are to be fulfilled in the ages to come.

In the prophetical scriptures of both Testaments, however, we have an intermixture of both promises and threatenings; of the completion of which, in ordinary cases, friends and foes are duly apprised. In a word, it is necessary to observe here, that, though one book is called historical and another prophetical, one doctrinal and another practical, it is not meant that the first is wholly historical, or the second altogether prophetical; the third entirely doctrinal, or the fourth entirely practical. In each of the inspired writings, there is a wise and gracious intermixture of histories and prophecies; doctrines and precepts, promises and threatenings.

The sacred books are usually distinguished into two parts, called the scriptures of the Old Testa-

ment, and the scriptures of the New. The former beginning with Genesis and ending with Malachi, comprehends the books which were written under the old administration of the covenant of grace; the latter, beginning with Matthew and ending with the Revelation, contains the books which were written after the commencement of the new dispensation. The covenant of grace, on which the redemption of the church of the first-born depends, is, in substance, the same in all ages earlier and later. But it admits of two great administrations; the Jewish, which preceded the incarnation of the Messiah, and the Christian, which succeeds it. The former is now old and antiquated, the latter new and obligatory. The terms *covenant* and *testament*, in this connexion, are synonimous. What the proper notion of a covenant, and of a testament is, and what the difference between the one and the other, I shall, in a subsequent lecture, have occasion to shew. To every person that has read the Greek New Testament, it must have occurred, that one word is, on one occasion, translated covenant, and on another, testament.

The particular times of writing the several sacred books cannot be precisely ascertained. Nor does it appear that they were written according to the order in which we now have them arranged. But, that all the books of the Old Testament were written before our Lord's incarnation; and all the books of the New, after his ascension, does not admit of a doubt. Is any one solicitous to know the nature of the Jewish economy? He must cousult the writings of Moses and the subsequent Prophets. Is any one desirous to understand the nature of the Christian dispensation, and its superiority to the Jewish? He must apply for information, to the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles.

The most part of the Old Testament, as is well known, was originally written in *Hebrew*, and the

New Testament in *Greek*. The reason of writing the former in Hebrew, and the latter in Greek, is obvious. The Hebrew was the language of the Jews, to whom the prophetical oracles were originally committed. The Greek was most universally known when the scriptures of the New Testament were written. Accordingly, previous to writing any part of the New Testament, the scriptures of the Old had been translated into Greek. The translation, which goes under the name of the *Septuagint*, is well known. It has its name, which signifies seventy, from the number of persons supposed to have been employed in it. The history of this famous translation of the Old Testament is, in short, this. Ptolomy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, having erected a fine library in the city of Alexandria, was solicitous to fill it with the most curious and valuable books which he could collect from all quarters; and, having been informed that the Jews had a famous book which contained the laws of Moses, and the history of their nation, applied to Eleazer, the Jewish high-priest, for a Greek translation of it. In order to induce the high-priest to comply with his request, he liberated all the Jews whom his father, Ptolomy Soter, had reduced to slavery. The Jewish high-priest sent to the Egyptian king an exact copy of the Mosaical law, written in letters of gold; and along with it six elders out of each tribe, in all seventy-two; who are usually styled the seventy interpreters; because seventy is the round number. They were received with marks of great respect by the king, and conducted into the isle of Pharos, where they were lodged in a house prepared for their reception; and furnished with every accommodation. They set about the translation immediately, and finished it in seventy-two days. The whole being read in the presence of the king, he admired the profound wisdom of the Jewish law, and sent home the elders loaded with presents for themselves, the high-priest, and for the temple.

(To be continued.)